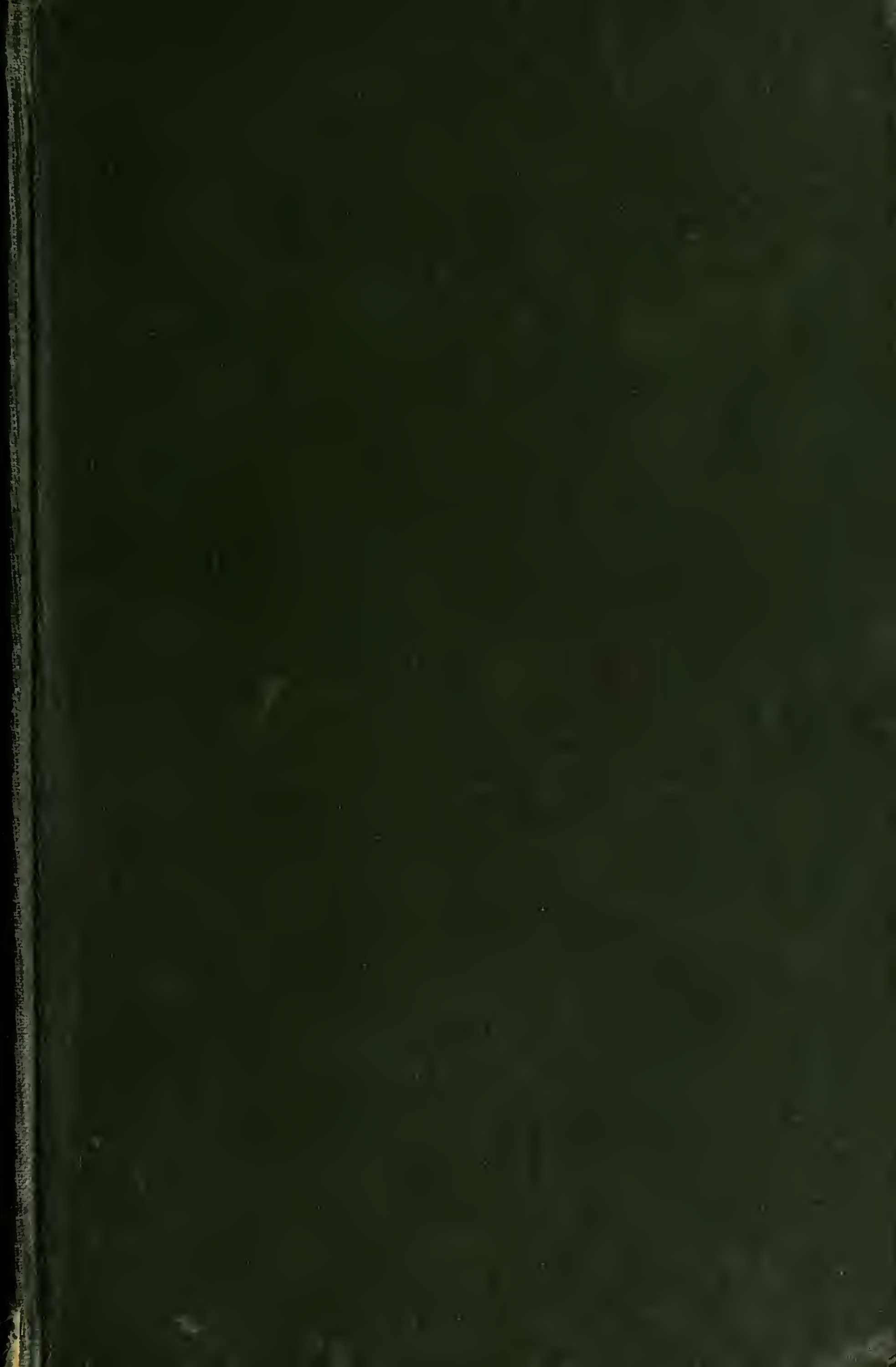

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PRINCESS PENNILESS

PRINCESS PENNILESS

BY

S. R. CROCKETT

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON MCMVIII

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CHAPTER I

THE MEETING

HUBERT SALVESON escaped with a sudden feeling of elation from the prison closes of the Manor House. Tim was a good fellow, but selfish, already reckoning what his father would leave him, discounting it, weighing the advantages of this position, and that other marriage. He had resolved in his heart not to take his profession of barrister seriously. There was no need. In the neighbourhood there were many daughters of rich merchants, shipowners, and whatnot, any one of whom would be glad to become mistress of the ancient Manor House of Thorsby, which would be his one day.

With his father the boy Hubert had even less in common. His dry, reserved greetings, once made at breakfast, then over for the day; his constant falling back upon absolute paternal authority; and his devotion to subjects which, to the young man, seemed lifeless as last year's desiccated leaves in some hollow of the dene, had raised between the two an almost insurmountable barrier.

He avoided Aunt Kidson with an instinct made keener by the remembrance of her hand heavy upon him in days gone by. His liberal spirit felt repressed, prisoned, strait-jacketed within the dreary Manor House of Thorsby. In the garden it was better. There were green walks with seats at the end, where one could sit and read. Only Tim was generally there, prowling up and down with a book

in his hand. Then the brothers would hail each other, not unamiably.

"Hello, Fat Boy!"

This was Hubert's greeting to Tim.

"Ah, Spooner!"

The riposte was Tim's to Hubert, referring to a supposed liking for the society of ladies. Then they separated, amicable as before, but without affection.

Outside began at once the curious sound which so greatly excited the boy. Something tremulous it was—the breath of a big workaday town, the nervous hum of voices, the whir of distant hammers, boiler-punching machines, the syrens of tugs out on the river, the whistle and snort of great green engines, the waving of flags on high bridges, red, green, or dirty white, semaphores wagging stiff-limbed against the sky, the rumble of tramways, the sharp tinkle of their stopping bells.

This was life to Hubert. Life—life—common ordinary life! How he loved it. He inhaled it, with his nostrils dilated. His bosom heaved. Let Tim stay and lounge away his life in the green Manor House glades, the last left of the river-side gardens, and calculate how much they would bring let out in building lots. He, Hubert, would go down to the quays, or up on the distant common where the windmills were. The cinder paths crunched pleasantly beneath his feet. He liked the close clayey smell of the brickfields. It was, in spite of the smoke, a bright, vivid world. He loved it. The Valley of Dry Bones was left behind him, behind the brick walls of the Manor House.

"Be a doctor," he meditated. "Yes; perhaps, in a way I am a doctor already; but—I will see the world first. This world—ah——"

He stopped, and drew a long, steady breath.

"They are fighting for their living down there by thousands," he said, looking with beating exultant heart at the big sheds from which the ships building,

or in for repairs, poked out their noses from myriads of struts and crosspieces. Then the words burst from him.

"I don't care what my father says—I will, I will!"

He continued in a more subdued tone:

"He had *his* time, so they say. Why should he grudge me mine? I will make my own way. I do not want his money. A doctor—perhaps! But in the meantime I will not live here under the eye of that woman and her Old Cats. Nor yet in Edinburgh with Aunt Kiddy's sister, taking me to hospital and meeting me at the college gates, lest I come to any harm! It makes me a laughing-stock."

It was in this frame of mind that he stood on Farne Height, a little bit of common above Thorsby city, left by a certain old lady's will to be made into a public park some day. But the Thorsby municipality, caring only for its docks, its new Town Hall, and water committee picnics to the reservoir on the Cheviot slopes, had left the old lady's gift to its original pravity. Perhaps it was just as well. Boys played cricket there, though placards prominently placed all about forbade them. They kept a skinned eye on the "bobbies," however, knew just where they would appear and when. Then, pulling up stumps, securing bats and ball, their rapidity of disappearing was mere conjuring. And lo! the bobby stood forth alone, a grim but impotent figure in the clear, sharp sunshine, and hostile winds.

Small paths, too, ran across Farne Height, between every street and every other. Very like sheep-tracks they were, on the distant Cheviot sides yonder, so blue on the northern horizon. They criss-crossed inconceivably, and you had to keep the shadowy gullet of the street you were making for straight before your nose, in order not to be drawn into broad, deceitful paths, which led—whither you had no call to go.

It was there, after some years of absence at college

and abroad, that Hubert Salveson met—some one he thought he knew; some one he would like to know; some one he did know! No—yes; could it be? By jove, Edith—little Edith Dillingham, who used to live in the cottage by the Waterside of Thorsby, long ago.

Now she was going across the common on a marketing errand. A little basket was on her arm.

"Edith, don't you remember me—Hubert Salveson?"

There came a little answering blush, but no confusion.

"I remember you very well," she said, holding out her hand quietly. ("As if somebody came back every day!" thought Hubert, a little disappointed.)

"How you *have* grown!" he burst out, "and oh—I say——!"

He checked himself on the eve of an outcry of admiration. He had never, never seen so pretty a girl as "little Ede Dillingham" had become. But he knew instinctively that the time for that declaration was not yet.

"May I walk a little way across the common with you? You are going to Cheasely Farm for eggs, are you not?"

She nodded, smiling, but, making no objection, they went their way side by side. Working-men's daughters are accustomed to look after themselves, even when their fathers own two houses. Cunningly Hubert strove to awaken old memories into new tendernesses.

"Do you remember Green Lane station?" he said, glancing (more across than down) at the tall slip of girlish figure, just beginning to round its curves tenderly with the coming of the gracious "twenties." "I do! I shall never forget the Saturday mornings we spent there. Your mother turned you out of the house, so that she could wash up, swill the yard, and have all neat and straight before

your father came home. And she gave you the kids—children I mean—to look after! Will, wasn't it? he could toddle—just. But the baby, you had to carry her—it was a her, I'm nearly sure."

Edith continued to smile and nod, but dubiously looking at the ground. She changed her egg-basket from one hand to the other farther from him, fearing that he might think it necessary to "request the pleasure" of carrying it. That was the way young men in her own circle talked, and she hated it. But Hubert had the fine sense with women, which can never be learned. It is instinctive. A man either has it, or lacks it all his life long.

"Green Lane station—yes, I remember!" she said, softly; "you were a kind little boy in those days—not like other boys!"

"I hope I am now," said Hubert, much elated. But he was wise in his day and generation. He took no advantage, nor attempted any.

"And I used to wait till you were clear of the street—Cheviot Road did not go far along in those days. Then you and I used to carry the cub time about. Gracious, how I used to fear lest any of the little day-school boys would see me carrying a baby, and tell our Tim!"

"You fought one once, and I did not speak to you for a week!" said Edith, becoming interested, as the hour hand of memory swept back upon the dial of Time.

"Yes, I did; but that was because of something or other he said!"

Hubert was in full flood now, and from his slightly superior height bent a little towards Edith. They came to the high road which skirts the edge of the common. A butcher's cart, recklessly driven by a youth showing his powers of standing up between the wheels, rattled past. As if instinctively (and perhaps, who knows, really so) Hubert's hand stole swiftly to that of the girl, clasped it, and drew her

back out of danger. But he did not hold it a moment too long. That was his gift—to know that. Edith could not complain, little accustomed as she was to permit the least familiarities. So many girls did not mind. She did. But he had passed on before she had time to speak. She felt it would have been silly. He was again at Green Lane. He babbled of it. Nevertheless she changed the basket defensively back to the hand that was a-tingle.

"And do you remember the station—what a funny idea? Yet we went there every holiday, just to see the trains go by. Jove! I can smell the white steam yet, that hissed out from under the wheels when the 'goods' were shunted; can't you, Ede—Miss Dillingham? And there was the old stationmaster who would not let us go on the platform, but talked to us quite friendly-like over the white gate—wooden it was, and cut into points at the top. There were spikes, too, but we held the children up anyway. Then there was a place at the corner, from which I drew the spikes out with a claw-hammer, and we used to hang half over that, with Will and—the baby——"

"Yes," said Edith, looking eagerly at him for the first time, "and shout when a fast one was coming. We knew it quite a long way away. It went 'Carrà-tà—Caràta—Caràta!' But the slow ones just plain 'Shush-Shush' and 'Bumpety-Bump'!"

"Exactly!" cried Hubert enthusiastically, the dry-as-dust chambers of the manor a million miles behind him, and all the fresh breathing world before, the prettiest girl he had ever seen by his side, and all the way back from Cheasely Farm to go. "How you do remember! And the lunch—yours, I mean. I never had any. Old Mother Kidson was too sharp for me. If I was not back for lunch I got none, and my father gave us no pocket-money, on principle; I don't know what principle, but anyway we got none, Tim and I. So

you used to share with yours, 'Go shags,' we called it, and say that I deserved it for helping to carry the baby. How good it was! And after a while the stationmaster got to know us, and I think felt a little flattered that we used to come so far; he asked us once, you remember, to see *his* station and *his* trains every Saturday! And once, it was a kind of Sunday —somebody dead, everybody in mourning, and few trains—he took us inside the little place where he sold the tickets, and let us punch old pieces of cardboard to make believe. He was a good sort, that stationmaster, though grumpy at first!"

Hubert had kept his eyes on Edith. Her colour gradually heightened, and she seemed to breathe from higher up—quicker too.

"Are you tired? Let us sit down a moment—that last bit was rather stiff." But she took fright at this.

"Oh, no," she said, hastily, "it is nothing. I must get on. Mother will be expecting me."

"Where do you live?" he asked simply. She knew where he lived. There was no reason why he should not know where she lived.

"Along in Bourne Street, off the Cheviot Road. Father bought two houses there after we left Waterside. They are not our own," she added, quite quickly; "we are paying them off by degrees—Building Society, you know."

"Ah," said Hubert, indifferent to worldly goods, at his age and in his circumstances, "what number?"

"107 and 109," said Edith, rather piqued at his indifference (yet somehow secretly pleased, too). "We live in 109."

"I—I," began Hubert.

He was going to say, "I would like to come and call upon you!" But he recognised that, both for the sake of the Manor House circle and for Edith's own sake, the time for that had not yet come. News, and especially such gossip, travels swiftly in

Thorsby. The town was not big enough to be fitted with the "not-know-your-next-door-neighbour" armour-plate against undue carrying of tales.

So he was silent. Presently they were within sight of Cheasely Farm, a little snug farmhouse among trees, now shrinking into a mere hen-run by the gradual encroachments of the market gardener on one side, and the speculative builder on the other.

"I shall wait for you here, if I may, till you come out?" he said.

"You are going farther—I am quite accustomed to getting home alone!"

On this occasion Edith's answer was hardly quite ingenuous. She knew well enough from the first that he would walk back with her. Furthermore, without being of the prophetesses, she foresaw a great number of walks on egg-days over Farne Height and along the lanes to Cheasely Farm. Clearly she would have to be careful. And she meant to be. She had been accustomed all her life to look after herself, but though Green Lane Station was very delightful to talk about, and she liked this handsome, fair young man, with the boyish eagerness, to bend towards her, while he recalled those forenoon lunches and shy half-pence spent at the neighbouring cottage with the "pop-beer" ticket in the window corner—still——

In fact, she had a father, and he had another—the two men very different. He had a career. She—but she had not yet thought out what hers was to be. At any rate, one thing was clear. Green Lane could not come twice in their lives. She was twenty, or near it. And he—was it two-and-twenty or three-and-twenty?

"I will wait then," he said.

Edith said nothing, as he watched the clear lift of her heels from the muddy farm lane, and the lissom sway of her young body. She passed out of sight.

CHAPTER II

ONLY THE BRAVE!

CHEASELY FARM proved of good omen for the welding of ancient friendships. It chanced that there was a young man there, a visitor out for the day to see his aunt, Mrs. Owen Jones. Richard Jones was his name, a slouching youth, dark-skinned, sidelong of regard, somehow giving the impression of squinting without actually doing so. But he did not use the name of Jones, which is not popular in his profession on English race-courses. He was book-keeper to a bookmaker, but one day he hoped to be a "booky" himself and have a clerk of his own. In the meantime, he had an off day or two between Dean Heath races last Thursday and those of Alnwick Moor on Monday.

It was one of his fixed ideas that no girl could withstand him. His aunt, a jolly Welsh woman, laughed at his half-comprehended jokes, and specially admired the way he had of pushing back his hat from his brow, in order to dab a fine uncrumpled cambric handkerchief upon it. In doing so he showed his gold studs, his cuff-links, while the diamond pin in his tie flashed. Richard Jones, alias Dicky Wood, "booky's" clerk, considered himself the citizen of no mean city out among the "greenies" at Cheasely Farm.

So it was that, having availed himself of certain opportunities, while his aunt was away fetching the eggs, he followed Edith out to the big farm gate, still pressing his assiduities upon her. He would

carry her basket. He had a trap in the stable. He would "drive her over." He could refuse her nothing—such lovely eyes!

Edith Dillingham came forth from the big wooden gate of the farm with heightened colour. Her eyes were indeed flashing. She had just been told how well she looked when angry. And there, just where she expected to see him, was Hubert, standing thoughtfully at the corner of the road, tapping the point of his shoe with his stick. He was very content to wait. But, at the quick, light sound of footsteps he looked up quickly.

Edith Dillingham walked straight to him and said in a clear voice: "That fellow there has been annoying me. Please tell him to go away!"

And she felt glad that it was Hubert. If it had been her father, he might have killed the man. And Will would have been of little use, in spite of the best intentions. But, somehow, she felt she could trust her old comrade of the Green Lane days to do enough without doing too much.

Something fine and keen as the pricking of many needle-points danced in all the veins of the young man. His heart felt light and glad. He drew a long breath, looked once over his shoulder to see that Edith was far enough out of earshot. Then he approached Mr. Richard Jones, alias Wood, who stood staring.

"You have been annoying that young lady," he said, so quietly and without menace that the "bookie" was reassured. "Another turnip!" he thought.

"And what may that be to you?" demanded Mr. Richard Jones (or Wood). He was rather fancied as a middle-weight among "classy" amateurs at the back of racing stables. But he did not know that Hubert, whose medical education at the University of Edinburgh had not been wholly serious, had spent a good deal of time being knocked about under the able tuition of Billy Eames, of the

Victoria Bar, where he was rated easily as Champion of the Heavies.

He did not look it, taking out his weight mostly in length of limb and thickness of chest. It was as in the days of primæval man. There was one woman—two men. And till, as the children say, one "gave the other best," there could be no peace in the land. One last glance at Edith to see that she was too far off to see him fighting, afforded the honourable Mr. Richard Jones Wood his chance. His left shot out and took Hubert Salveson on the turned cheek solidly. Then he sprang back, on the defensive in a moment.

Very calmly Hubert turned his cuffs up, loosening the plain gold bars which held them. Then he stepped towards Mr. Richard Jones as if to congratulate him.

But something hard and irresistible broke under that youth's favourite high-guard. His left eyebrow got that. A falling chimney-pot seemed to hit him under the ear. There was no chimney-pot. Richard hit out wildly. His arms were not long enough. Then came an earthquake shock on the point of his chin. He lost his balance, and a moment after his consciousness.

He awoke in a half-dry ditch, with the farm dog licking his face.

He kicked it angrily.

"Get off, you beast!" he cried, sitting up. "Where am I?—what has happened? Oh, that fellow—a regular windmill! I'll have it out with him yet, or my name is not Richard Jones—I mean, Wood! I'll teach him what a sand-bag means."

And as he looked across at the scrabbled paths of Farne Height Common, he saw a pair walking side by side—very small, clear, and black figures halfway up.

And it seemed to him that it was the man who was carrying the egg-basket.

. . . . .

Hubert Salveson had said nothing when he made up on Edith Dillingham. Back there at the gate of Cheasely Farm all had passed in a couple of minutes. He had replaced his studs, pulled down his cuffs, gathered a little hedge-root bouquet of wild violets, and so was by her side, the same gravely smiling Hubert as before.

"May I give you these for the sake of old Green Lane?" he said, ignoring the little affair with Mr. Richard Jones entirely. But though she took the flowers, Edith was not thus to be put off.

"Did he say anything?" she queried.

"Not much," said Hubert curtly.

"Has he gone back to the farm?"

"I don't know," said Hubert; "the brute!"

"What—did he strike you?" said Edith anxiously.

"Not that I know of," said the young man carelessly; and would again have directed the talk to the fruitful topic of Green Lane, but a little cry from his companion interrupted him.

"Oh! there is blood on your cheek; he *did* strike you! You are hurt! Oh, I shall never forgive myself! Never! I made you!"

And she turned pale at the thought that she, Edith Dillingham, had been the cause of all that.

"Pah! it is nothing," said Hubert, laughing and dabbing his cheek-bone with his handkerchief. "It happens every day in the 'salles.'"

But Edith would have nothing of this. She did not know what "salles" were, and did not care. He was wounded—wounded for her, and forgive herself she never could. She carried, however, a little old-fashioned housewife in her pocket. Her father and Will were always coming home from their work with knuckles chipped and bits of skin knocked off here and there. So she snipped the black court-plaster with experienced scissors.

Then, standing on tip-toe, she first dried the slightly bleeding bruise and then affixed the plaster,

knowingly enough. Hubert hardly dared to breathe. All his faculties were alert. He wanted just to keep on so for ever. He felt her breath on his cheek, her lips were near to his, parted a little, anxious, eager—her eyes, too.

But he refrained himself, being a gentleman, and also having that inner sense. He knew that the girl blamed herself for what had happened. She pitied him—nothing more—yet. He was not going to make a mistake by forcing the pace. He thanked her gravely and rightly.

"You ought to have been of my profession," he said; "you would do us credit. More than I ever will."

"Yes, you will," she answered, incoherently, her nerves still shaken; "are you really a surgeon—a doctor?"

"My father wishes me to be," he said. "I am not greatly enamoured of the business, to tell the truth. But the appetite comes in eating, as some proverb or other says."

"Oh, tell me," she said; "I knew you had been a long time away! Tell me all about it!"

At this point it was that he stretched out his hand for the egg-basket, which she let him take as if not noticing. They were remounting the steep slopes of Farne Height Common. He only wished that he dared ask her to take his arm.

And just at that very moment, away back at Cheasely Farm, a dusty, bedraggled youth, half raised from the ground in a sitting position, was shaking his fist at them.

"I don't know how ever I can go back there for eggs," said Edith, "and mother likes them so. They do her so much good. They are so much fresher and cheaper than those you buy in the market."

"I do," said Hubert, possessing himself of his ancient comrade's hand (this was better than Green Lane station). "*I* will come with you!"

But Edith, seeing more truly, shook her head a trifle sadly, and gently withdrew her hand; not, however, quite at once.

Thus once again were old lamps exchanged for new, and that by the kind intervention of Providence, plus Mr. Richard Jones, alias Wood. Two young people set their feet in the ancient path again, along the lane that was green—very green that high, bright April day, while over the Tor estuary the white clouds sailed like all the galleons of Spain.

CHAPTER III

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM AT THORSBY

"SAY, Sue Dillam, what 'ud you give to have that windowful of gold?"

It was on the Plain Stones of Thorsby, market day, the shop windows all dressed to draw custom. Mr. Tom Hime, the new jeweller, had made a special display. Tom had been a Thorsby boy, but had spent ten years learning the ways of the metropolis, and he objected to be called "a watchmaker." It was, indeed, a name palpably absurd. For watches were made far off in Switzerland or America, as was generally stated on some inconspicuous part of their fabrics. Specially did the jeweller object to being called (as he was for the most part) "owd Billy Hime's Tom!"

The shrewd Thorsby people, who had not then added a watchmaking and "jewellery" department to the "Co-op," or Co-operative Store, soon learned how to put "Mr. Hime" in good humour. They had only to ask for the latest news from Bond Street. Then their watches were soon done, and they were not charged 20 per cent. additional on their purchases—chiefly in the hair-brooch and keepsake line.

Young Sue Dillingham (Dillam for short) stood with her friend, Agnes Anne Jacox, rubbing their knees against the jeweller's brass plate, which went all the way along under the window, and served as an excuse for his 'prentice, Ebie Fleming, to spend most of his time on the street, with a dirty clout in

one hand, and words of mockery in his mouth. It was good to be the "'prentice" of the leading dealer in the precious metals in Thorsby.

Tom Hime did not do much hard work himself—indeed, very little of any kind. He had had enough of that in Bond Street. But he had two men, and this same said invaluable Ebie. One of these two was constantly "on the road"—that is, he visited the great houses of the neighbourhood once a week, wound up and "regulated" all the clocks from second floor to basement. The Salveson boys, young men with little taste for getting up early in the morning, or going to lessons with their tutor, declared that he "wrongulated" them. But old Bidon, a shuffle-footed, conscientious, once-capable old "foozle," certainly did his best for Tom Hime. Indeed, it was not in his nature to do anything else. He thought there was nobody so clever, so accomplished, so handsome as Tom Hime. He had known his father, and had served him with fidelity, when there were no plate-glass windows, neither any array of gold watches, beginning very small and ending very big. There was just a narrow-paned oblong to admit the light, two benches, and two men with black horn lenses screwed in their eyes, regarding intently the entrails of various "verge" watches, which, apparently, they were stirring up with a pin to do their duty. These were old Billy Hime and his journeyman, Araham Bidon.

Abraham was a real "journeyman" now, and besides winding clocks and "wrongulating" them (according to the brothers Salveson), he sold watches on the credit system, and all manner of cheap jewellery from coloured catalogues, with the prices entered in Tom Hime's hand. He got a penny in the shilling commission on all he sold, and considered that he was doing well. There was an air of reposeful honesty about him which people liked. And indeed with cause. Above all, he was faithful,

with an immense fidelity to "owd Billy Hime's Tom"—that very clever and smart young man, who played such an excellent game of billiards (and, less excellently, other games) at the Thorsby Merchants' Club. Tom's second adult subordinate was Peterson, the new shopman, who had no very marked characteristics save white teeth, which caused him to be fond of singing hymns, and obtained for him an invitation to sit in the choir. As to his voice, the less said about that the better; but he looked well in a black cutaway coat—and the teeth.

Meantime Sue Dillingham and her friend Agnes Anne swung their green baize bags and rubbed their worn school frocks against the brass plate inscribed "Thomas Hime, Art Jeweller, etc., late from Messrs. Savory and Rose, Bond Street, London." There were two windows, so that a casual observer would have been justified in thinking that Messrs. Savory and Rose occupied one side of the shop, while Tom Hime ran a strong opposition on the other. The door came just after the "late from" in the printed announcement.

"*Get away, you girls!* Go home!"

Sue Dillam and Agnes Anne Jacox started. They thought it was Tom Hime himself, who was a great man to them; or, even worse, the new shopman, whose teeth they had admired in church. They were ready to move off when they saw the ruddy cheeks and kindly carroty hair of Master Ebenezer Fleming peeping past the glass door. He held the duster behind him, and grinned at their discomfiture. Whereupon the retreating girls promptly rallied. Ebie Fleming indeed! He had not long since left school, and Sue had more than once boxed his ears. What did she care for Ebie Fleming, even though he called himself an apprentice art jeweller? And nobody knew what that was.

"Come out and clean those dandy-plates," she

retorted. "If Tom Hime comes back from the 'Royal' [hotel understood] and sees the dirt on them, he'll—he'll *whip* you. Then you'll howl! You always used to when old Galway welted you—howled like a baby, you did. I can hear you yet! Can't *you*, Agnes Anne?"

"M-m-m-m-m-m!" said Agnes Anne uncertainly. She was a little older than Sue Dillam, and knew that both she and Ebie Fleming would grow up still more. There was no use spoiling chances which might come in useful later. One never knew. There was a goods clerk at the station who was now going with Marjory Baikie (a minx!), who might, if it hadn't been for that tongue of Sue's—— But, ah, well, it couldn't be helped now. And besides, there was the new assistant, with the lovely white teeth (they said he cleaned them with pearl-powder, like the shop jewellery) grinning at them from behind the window-screen.

"Shut up, Sue Dillam!" she whispered, nudging her friend with her elbow.

"No, I won't. Shut up yourself, oyster!" said Sue out loud. Then she continued her pitched battle with the "'prentice." Agnes Anne did not yet know the opposite sex. Ebie Fleming was enjoying himself very much, and though he did not think her so pretty, he immensely preferred Sue to Agnes Anne. He called the latter (privately to Sue) "a softie."

"Come out and do your cleaning, housemaid!" she called loudly. Ebie, strong in the knowledge that the brass name-plate was speckless, contented himself with the mood called irony. She was only a little dirty schoolgirl, and hadn't even a clean handkerchief to blow her nose withal! He dwelt rudely on the necessity for this, till Sue was really aroused. She drew forth her "spare" handkerchief, carefully unfolded it, and put it delicately to her lips, inhaled the (quite supposititious) perfume.

Ebie made a dash from the door, failed to secure a new cleaning rag, but caught instead a sound box on the side of his cheek, which made his head ring for hours after. He dropped his own duster on the flags as he was making a dash for safety.

Sue Dillam picked it up, carried it gingerly to the gutter, carefully gathered as much of what she called the "sleetch" as possible without wetting her fingers. Then she stepped forward, daubed the contents all over the sacred names of Messrs. Savory and Rose, deleted the delightfully suggestive Bond Street, London, W., and finished up by dragging the filthy rag across the style and profession of the notable owner himself.

Then she flung the remainder poultice in the astonished face of Ebie, and walked off home without turning round—except, of course, once to put out her tongue at him. The merest self-respect required so much.

Thus is begun love's young dream, as it is known to the "'prentice" lads and future dressmakers of Thorsby.

CHAPTER IV

"IN THE SWEAT OF HIS BROW"

SUE DILLINGHAM had a big sister, Edith—and a bigger brother, Will. Indeed, it seemed that other people's brothers might prove good enough for her. Sue scorned the delights of "company keeping," declaring that all boys in a lump were "beasts." She couldn't bear them. As for men, they walked about in clothes of different shapes, with hats high and hats low. But, saving her father and Will, her brother, she knew none of them. She was fond of her father; of Will, too—that is, sometimes. More often she would gladly have scratched his eyes out. He teased her so, and it was such a worrit turning the mangle to do his shirts. Three a week he must have—one because he went to choir practice (Tuesdays) at their chapel, two because he went to Bible-class (Fridays), and three because, of course, he had to have one for Sundays fresh and fresh. So had her father, though he never went to church, for some reason at that time dark to Sue.

Many things were dark to Sue—why she was forbidden to go near the docks, where there was such a stir of life, such curious foreign smells of pitch, and cordage, and casks with nice new hoops and branded tops. Her father was first teamster there in the railway service, "lorryman" they called it in Thorsby, where the most northerly English speech of the east coast almost met the twang of the Scottish "lallan."

A rough, gruff, smoky, healthy, wind-swept,

grimy place was Thorsby, with shipbuilding yards, iron-works, rolling mills, a port bigger than its present needs, and far-extending suburbs, so new that whole quarters smelt of the warm reek of the brick-field. These were generally building society houses, which (on some plan that never worked itself out) were one day to become the property of the occupant. But no one had ever seen the day when the original proprietor had paid off all and sat a free man under his own porch, with geraniums in the front-window boxes.

The system was beautiful—on paper. But the house always came back to the Moon-Washington—original co-operative building society. Obviously, too, there was profit in the affair, somewhere. Look at those mahogany-countered offices and the vast staff of clerks and collectors. The nominal house-owners thought hardly and spoke slightingly after a few years' experience of the mysterious Mr. Moon-Washington. They pictured him riding about in his carriage, or smoking priceless cigars on twenty thousand pound yachts. But really Mr. Moon-Washington was a harmless dreamer, ensconced in a ragged dressing-gown, ink on his fingers, and many wrinkles across his vast brow. He had gone mad on the multiplication table as applied to house-building. His scheme was perfect. Only he had left out of account the migratory habits of the working-classes, strikes, lock-outs, death or dis-ablement of bread-winners and instalment-payers. Otherwise, there was no doubt at all that Mr. Moon-Washington would have created a new earth of neat little brick boxes, in which people might live and keep themselves warm.

The Dillingham house was their own—on Mr. Moon-Washington's plan. They were also respon-sible for that of their next neighbour, Jo Challoner. That is, Jo's wife paid the rent occasionally to Mrs. Dillingham, and she (poor woman) had to pay two

rents, instalment of price and interest on each to the Moon-Washington Building Society collector every Monday morning. It lay under a particular blue saucer on the kitchen-dresser, and was greatly sacred.

Her husband had done it all for the best. He was always going to meetings, and bringing home the *Iconoclast*—the organ of advanced free-thought and the mistakes of Moses. His wife did not like this, for, except when preparing dinner, she continued to frequent the chapel where she had been christened, and her father's pew, to which she was attached, because of the brown inscriptions under the book-board, cut so deeply by her brothers' penknives, that not even varnish or paint could fill them up. She was not on speaking terms with the most part of them, but somehow their names cut in the pew caused religious feelings to arise in her heart.

All manner of sects did well in Thorsby.

The little Presbyterian kirk throve amazingly. So did the Wesleyans. There were a good many Baptists, but for the present they either went to the Presbyterian kirk in Kingdom Come Lane, or read Spurgeon's sermons quietly at home. That made a wondrous good excuse for staying away from church. Not that Ned Dillingham had any such weakness.

"I am an unbeliever!" Daily he declaimed the fact—upon the windy landing-stages and chilly platforms of the G.N.R., where the trucks clicked up to the unloading cranes, and the casks of Archangel tar and the North Sea herring-barrels swung creaking this way and that across the granite-fronted quays.

"An out-and-outer, yes, Jo—that's me, and no mistake about it!" he would say to his neighbour and nominal tenant, Jo Challoner. But the "out-and-outer" would frequently lend Jo "half-a-sov." to give his wife to hand over to Mrs. Dillingham to pay up the two weeks' rent owing to the "out-and-outer." Moreover, the "out-and-outer" would say nothing about this transaction to any living soul.

It might hurt Jo if it were known. Besides, the mates would laugh at him—Ned Dillingham, and he would have to "mell" somebody—always an unpleasant necessity for the "out-and-outer."

As for the parson of the church by law established, he came little in the way of that section of Thorsby to which the Dillinghams belonged. He lived in an out-at-elbows vicarage, had many children, paid his bills with some irregularity, and from the black aureole of a hat set far back on his head, a kindly anxious face beamed out on the world. Thorsby had no high Anglican sympathies. It was all rough, vigorous life; whenever it took to religion, it flung itself into the more active forms of Methodism, into conceit-breeding Plymouth Brotherhood—while, owing to its proximity to Scotland the Kirk Presbyterian held its own.

"We're pretty divided," said Sue Dillingham; "Mother an' Edith go turn about to Mr. Marchbank's, just as mother always did. Will is 'New Connexion,' because his girl goes there. Father is nothing at all, and takes a walk instead. I'd go with father, only he'd whop me. He says I'm too young to know anything about anything. He's a Socialist or something. I wish he would preach on a chair in the park. That would be fun. At least, I think so. But Edith says not."

Thus far Sue Dillingham explained matters to her comrade, Agnes Anne. She was little, dark, wiry, with very bright eyes. She did everything in a rush, from buttoning her boots to slamming the wash-house door in her brother's face when he teased her past bearing.

"You, Agnes Anne Jacox"—she went on—"you think no end of yourself, just because Ted Jones, the ugly, red-headed pupil-teacher, favours you in school, and takes such a while to show you how to hold your pen! *I've* seen you. Think you can take me in—me with a brother who has had six girls a'ready, and a sister like our Ede—yah, garr'on!"

"Why, what about your Edith—has she got a sweetheart really and really?" Agnes Anne's eyes were now all alive with curiosity. Talk of sweethearts always interested her. It was, indeed (said her comrades), the only thing that kept her from going to sleep on her feet.

"M—m—m—m—!" said Sue, in her turn, "what'd you give to know?"

"I don't believe she has," said the well-advised Agnes Anne.

"And why—she's the prettiest girl in Thorsby, and you'll never be like her!"

Sue bristled up in sharp defence of the absent, though, owing to Sue's temperament, sisterly tiffs were not unknown in the Dillingham household.

"Well," retorted Agnes Anne, "you needn't tell me. Edith Dillingham goes with her mother to that dreary Presbyterian meeting, while anybody who is anybody is either Methodist or Church. And though it's swellest to be Church, all the young men—the nice ones, I mean—go to our New Connexion chapel. We have lots of anthems and solos and silver trumpets, and hardly any sermon at all. Then at Sunday-school all the young ladies get chances to talk to the young gentlemen—the teachers, of course, I mean. Why, I'm only in the junior Bible-class, but Ephraim Skinner, who is first counterman with Sampson, the grocer in Cross Street, patted my arm twice when he was serving out the library books. Just you wait till I'm a teacher, that's all—won't I have fun?"

"Pu-u-uah," scorned Sue, through puckered lips, "our Ede doesn't let grocers' boys pat *her* arm——"

"Eph Skinner isn't a boy," cried Agnes Anne; "he's out of his time—a regular improver, and can make twelve shillings a week! And I shan't interduce him to you. Now, then! There! See what you've done for yourself!"

CHAPTER V

NO. 109, BOURNE STREET, CHEVIOT ROAD

IT was Sunday morning, and we have for once caught all the Dillinghams at home. A little house, 109, Bourne Street, Cheviot Road, in the Moon-Washington Building Society district, in its reddest, brickiest, unpaid-upest depths, stood, or rather was propped up between two others, the cottage of the Dillinghams. You knew it easily as you came along the street, passing the grocer's shop at the corner (with its aggressive biscuit-tin advertisements), by an oval glass shade with waxen fruit underneath, and a couple of books laid cornerways so as to show the gilt on the edges. Edith Dillingham knew better than that as to decoration, but she would not vex her mother by any change. Besides, the oval glass cover was a difference. All the others were round. And none had books. The books were not without their purposes, innocent as they looked.

If the back of one was turned to the street, Hubert Salveson, the doctor's college-bred son, knew that Edith Dillingham would not be going to church that morning alone. If, on the contrary, the edges of the photograph album were turned for him to see as he passed carelessly along the pavement, waving his cane, there was hope for the evening. Hubert Salveson had astonished his father by becoming an ardent Presbyterian. The doctor thought it must be the going to a Scotch college which did it, and resolved to see if he could not save enough money to

send him for a few terms to Oxford. For, you see, the Salvesons were somebody in Thorsby—the Dillinghams nobody in particular. Only the father was known to be an "out-and-outer," and Edith very decidedly the prettiest girl.

Thorsby was so near to the Border that on fine days from the top of the church tower one could make out the long blue dyke of the Cheviots on the north-western horizon. But what a tumult of wharves, crackling boiler-sheds, and thunderous rolling mills, of fussing steamers and snarling tug-boats—what wildernesses of masts and stacks of little, neat, "one-brick-thick-standing-on-end" Building Society houses lay between the Dillinghams' cottage and the hills of sheep and heather and far-crying whaups, which represented the Border line.

Thorsby was almost on the Debatable Land, and there was a time when a Scot was executed there merely for failing to prove himself an Englishman. Now fully one-half of the population was either of Scots emigration, or merely Scottish folk born on English soil.

Breakfast was being got ready at 109, Bourne Street, running up from Cheviot Road. They did not talk much on Sunday mornings in the Dillingham household. Edith had been up since a little before seven. Her father followed up an hour afterwards. Then he lit his Sunday briar and sat watching the girl polishing the kitchen stove, narrowing a contemplative eye through the smoke. He liked pretty girls—even his own. Then he went into the yard, as it was a fine bright morning, and smoked steadily, with his hands in his pockets.

He could hear the cheerful clatter within. Breakfast cups jingled. Spoons clicked. "*Rattle-rattle-rat-tat!*" That was the postman's knock. "A circular, father, and a tax-paper," called out Edith through the open window of the little scullery.

But she said nothing about what she had thrust in her pocket. She had, indeed, always objected to Sunday mails on principle, and had signed a petition to that effect got up by Mr. Marchbanks, the Presbyterian minister. No wonder! Her father was always at home on Sundays—also Will. But they would keep on. They were "so silly!" All young men in Thorsby were—except perhaps Hubert Salveson, the doctor's son, who lived in the big house called "The Manor," in the midst of orchards and gardens—a fine sober old house once, and still holding the fort against the advancing tide of Moon-Washingtonianism.

"Ede, where are my collars?" This was Master Will from his room, beginning to think of the New Connexion morning service and of a certain May Timson who would be there. She would be clad in sky blue, with a blue hat and eyes to match. So Master Will, with two years of his time to serve in the model department at Pritchard's building yard down by Torside, called for his collar. He thought May Timson would last longer than the others, if she were only in a milk-shop. But in any case a collar was an immediate necessity, and Edith had to get that collar. She had also washed, dressed, and ironed it earlier in the week—twice, indeed, because of an unexpected fall of sooty "smuts" from the glue factory chimney, down on the Cheviot-road marshes. Now she must find it, and stop putting down the breakfast things to do it, too.

Of course! Had she not put it away! Brothers are considerate animals in every rank of life.

Then, from the front room, Mr. Dillingham heard a kindly hoarse voice speak through a fit of coughing. It demanded a pair of scissors.

"And you may as well let out this waistband when you are about it, Ede!"

That was his wife, who had always been delicate, and took accordingly a longer rest on Sunday morn-

ings. Edith was young, and did not need it. Of course not.

Mr. Dillingham smiled and listened, cocking his eye at the progress of the tobacco in the briar-root.

"About my turn now," he muttered. But Sue was before him.

"Ede," she cried, "oh, come up quick—I can't find my left stocking——"

"Look under the bed," came Edith's reply, heard faintly through a pleasant buzz of frying bacon.

"And my other garter."

"Look on the floor. I've something else to do, silly."

"Oh, I've got them. And see here, Ede, I wish you would do my hair for me. I'm going New Connexion to-day."

"*Hanged if you are—always spying on me!*" The voice of Master Will growled from the landing above, where he was struggling with a rebellious button, which presently, resenting rough usage, went off with a crack.

"Here," cried Will, "Ede, you come up at once and sew me on a button. Look sharp. I'll be late if you don't, and it'll be your fault. Girls never have any sense, loitering about doing nothing!"

"In a moment, Will," called out Edith quietly. "I must get the breakfast ready, or father will be talking. Then I'll do your hair, too, Sue."

"I'll talk *now!*" murmured the "out-and-outer" grimly. "Will," he called up sharply, "and you, Sue, d'ye hear me? Answer, both o' ye."

Young man and maiden agreed that hear him they did. It was not good to be deaf on these occasions.

"You, Will, come down and help swill the yard. Bring the buckets and the mop. I'll give you a hand."

"But I'll have to take off my shirt, father. I'm very nearly dressed."

The protest was quite out of season.

"Take off your skin," cried the out-and-outer; "only come sharp and swill the yard. Now—jump! Don't need two tellings, for you won't get them."

Master Will descended in some haste. He had donned an ancient football "sweater" kept for suchlike fatigue duties.

"And now you, Susan"—Sue jumped—"go down and help your sister to get breakfast. I'll be indoors in a jiffy."

For some minutes nothing was heard in or around the Dillingham cottage save the fresh splash of buckets of water sluicing upon the yard flags, the cool, slushy "wisp" of the mop moving to and fro in the rear of the deluge, the plad-plad of Master Will's bare feet, and the busy to and fro of breakfast preparation in the little kitchen. Sue had still one stockingless foot thrust into a slipper without a heel, and hoped her father would not notice it.

"Are you ready, father? Breakfast is."

Lifting his head, the out-and-outer saw the prettiest girl in Thorsby, all the prettier for the close-fitting blue dress, with the white work apron, and her hair with the morning disorder still visible in its kinks and tangles.

"Jove, Ede," said the out-and-outer, "but that smells good."

Edith Dillingham held the door open and smiled.

"Come in and see for yourself, father," she said; "it isn't Easter Sunday every day in the year."

The out-and-outer stood a moment wholly taken aback. Between the refills of his pipe he had been reading a most destructive article by "Iconoclast" concerning Easter and Easter observances. He recollected the last decimating sentences:

"Such toten-work is worthy only of tattooed savage tribes, and not of a land of Free Thought and Free Speech! Yet still the absurd mummery

goes on in families. And that by the weakness of fathers of families who know better—yet who, instead of putting this fetish-worship down with a strong hand, permit and encourage the gibble-gabble of priests to take the place of the right reason of a Darwin and the remorseless logic of a Mill."

The out-and-outer did not understand all "Iconoclast's" allusions, but he felt he was being hit at unfairly, and for once the article did not subdue him. Usually "Iconoclast" went for the churches, the clergy ("a pampered priesthood"), or the useless, ignorant set of politicians calling themselves Liberals. Then Ned Dillingham was delighted; such "language" on paper delighted him like a good boxing match. But when "Iconoclast" saw fit to hit him, he was ready and willing to hit back.

"What business is it of his what I do in my own house?" he muttered. "If I had him down at the shop I'd show him, or behind the 'returned empties.' I'm as free a thinker as he is, and that I'll show him."

And he endured while Edith said a grace before meat, only keeping his eyes open as a silent protest.

CHAPTER VI

IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

PRETTY girls were common enough in Thorsby. The Thorsby breed, in its root-stock Northumbrian Scot, had been mixed with bank fishers, far-recruited foundry men, ships' carpenters, and traders to Baltic ports. Now it made as sturdy a mixed race as could be found betwixt John-o'-Groats and the Lizard. They were strong men—indeed, *had* to be to make a living in Thorsby—and, since in all ages the strong men have had the pick of the wives, after a generation or two you could not see prettier girls anywhere than on Thorsby Main of a Sunday.

Only Edith Dillingham was the prettiest where most were pretty and wholesome. The breezes of the German Ocean ruddied their cheeks, and, as there were no vast mills in Thorsby where girls were immured by the thousand, one saw none of the waxen complexions and delicate veined bluish brows a little narrower at the temples which mark so fatally the inland mill-working population.

"Besides," said the out-and-outer to Joseph Challoner, his neighbour and debtor, "I can make enough for the women folk. Thorsby wages are good wages, and I don't ask the girls to do more than help their mother."

"Ah," said Jo Challoner, with as near to a sneer as he dared allow himself within reach of that puissant left, "make ladies o' them, eh, Ned?"

"Nay, Jo," said Ned Dillingham, reverting to his South Border talk, "I donnot mean nothing o't' sort.

And have a care o' thy tongue, Jo. It'll mayhap get thee into trouble one o' thae days. What I do mean is that it's the lads that are to be set to the wark. They needs the polish pitten on them—wi' besom-shank if nowt else will do. But leave the lasses alone! I hae nobbut two, and our Ede's a wonderful taking wench, an' there's no end o' young fellows what would go from here to Berwick Brig on their knees to get her. I know we've got to part wi' her some day, the missus an' me. We've talked it over, lad, often an' often. Then there's little Sue. She's more my kind, and gies the lads mony a cuff to bring the water to their eyes. Aye, though she's nought but a skelpin' brat at her lesson-books yet, there's good stuff in Susan. I've always stuck to that, though she's as brown as a sixpenny cigar, and has a tongue that could clip clouts. She'll shoot up, some day, Jo, black but comely, as the Book says! That's our Sue!"

Jo Challoner laughed loud and long.

"I thowt," he chuckled, "that you was an 'Icon'-clast-er' out-and-out, and here you are picking words out o' the good Book like a very passon."

"I was brought up, Jo," said the out-and-outer, with heavy severity, "which is more than any of your mother's bairns ever could say. And if ye have owt to object to that—weel, lad, say on!"

But Jo Challoner had good reasons for changing the subject. He was a cunning, plausible man, a great shouter of hymns at street-corners, a great obtainer of goods on long credit, and he lived practically rent and tax free. It was not every man who could borrow both of these from his own landlord! Jo did, and despised the out-and-outer for letting him. He felt it was in some way a judgment on Ned Dillingham for unbelief. He knew that it was specially permitted to spoil the Egyptian.

Besides, one Sunday morning, when he was

singing lustily "Crown Him Lord of All," had not the out-and-outer interrupted from the other side of the garden wall with "Aye, crown Him, Jo, but first give them canary birds o' yours a drop o' water. They've been hanging in the sun for hours, and gaping their heads off for the want of it!"

This saying rankled in Jo Challoner's mind and slowly matured into a steady purpose of revenge. Besides, he hated the out-and-outer with the deadliest of all hatreds. He had received favours from him. That was the type of man Joseph Challoner was. But, all the same, no denomination of Christian people was good enough for him. So he was seriously thinking of founding one for himself.

When he did, Edith Dillingham, who hated the very sight of him, with a girl's instinctive mistrust, had a designation all ready for it—a name which she dared not tell her father, whose curious favour for Challoner was known to all the household of 109.

Edith's irreverent designation for Jo Challoner's projected sect was "The Holy Spongers." But where Edith erred was in not remembering that the disciples of Joe's new church were to "have all things in common"—same as the early Christians. This was "Heads I win—tails you lose" for Jo, because he had nothing whatsoever. He only wished he could get his landlord, the out-and-outer, to join. But that being hopeless, he daily mourned over the unbeliever, and to his wife, who somehow was always ailing, he predicted with power the fate of the ungodly. Mrs. Challoner did not sleep all that night, owing to the fact that (because of her hard heart) Joseph had very little hope for her either. She had been brought up "Church" and had always hankerings that way. In an unguarded moment she had confided to Jo, who called them desires o' the flesh.

Meantime, Joseph, her husband, watched her carefully out of the corner of his little porcine eye, which was for ever slouching in her direction, and then being snatched away again in haste.

This attention comforted Mrs. Challoner somewhat, especially when he called her "Molly," which he did sometimes. Then she would go about content for a whole day, in spite of the pain in her breast, a pain which always grew more intense after eating. She would have pretty smiling thoughts of Corwen, and the sweet bells that sounded so far over the green commons and fertile fields. It was by a stile there, within sight of the square church tower, just when the bells were chiming for evensong, that Jo had first called her "Molly."

Dear Jo! He did not mean to be unkind—ever. She was sure of that. Though sometimes, turning quickly as she did her work about the house, she caught a strange look on his face, a square ugliness about the jaw, a drawn pallor about the wicks of the mouth. Then she thought that Jo was troubled about money.

Well, he was! Jo Challoner was always troubled about money. But that was not what was squaring his jaw, hollowing his cheeks, and setting a fire like that of dying embers in his eye.

Nor was it the new sect. No, it was something else, quite different.

Meanwhile, being an observant man, he also watched all that went on in and about Number 109. His own house was 107, and Jo always felt it as one of the worst evils of landlordism that Ned Dillingham had taken about nine feet by six of the bottom of his (Jo Challoner's) yard, so as to put up a little workshop for himself.

Especially and particularly Jo was interested in Edith's admirers, and he could have given the out-and-outer much information with regard to his

elder daughter of which he was entirely unsuspicious.

For instance, he knew that Alf Hazel, the senior draftsman in Will's pattern shop, had three times gone up to the High Barnes station bookstall in order to get a copy of a paper (*Frocks and Fiction*) which Edith liked because of the patterns it contained. For Edith made her own dresses, and very cleverly too. She had an eye for the clean line, and knew the points of her figure with a calm certainty of judgment which had in it nothing either of conceit or of depreciation.

Jo Challoner, a chalky faced, partially bald, youngish-looking man of about fifty (which was his age), knew all the comings and goings of Edith Dillingham, even to the fact that she sometimes received letters which she hastily thrust unopened into her pocket, and that—well, that Hubert Salveson walked homewards with her from the Presbyterian Church at the back of Bewick Dene, time, light, and solitude aiding and abetting the first secrecy of the escort. After all, there was not much to find out. But with a man like Jo Challoner, much could be made out of little. And it satisfied his mean soul to put on a cloak and pull a big soft hat over his brows, like those which fishermen wear ashore. He limped a little, and bent over a staff, as he followed Edith Dillingham to church and back again. He noted to whom she spoke. On one or two occasions he was fortunate enough to hear what was said. Then, letting himself cautiously in, he hung up his detective dress behind the front door, and went in to see how his wife was looking. If worse, he was kinder, and perhaps even called her "Molly." If better, he dragged his brows into a bunch, and wondered audibly what she had found to waste her time over all the evening. Supper ought to have been ready. Or if ready, the food was bad, disgusting, uneatable, enough to turn

a pig. It did turn one, for Jo would fling upstairs to bed leaving his wife quietly crying below.

Jo Challoner was a man with a purpose. And there were those who affirmed that it took all the sheep's clothing he could heap on decently to cover the wolf's shag underneath.

But then ill-natured people will say anything.

CHAPTER VII

GAPPING AND MINING

WHEN you met Edith Dillingham face to face, and in a good humour, you saw that perfection of beauty which only happens in the English lower, middle, and upper working-classes. She had a small head, about which she dressed her ruddy gold hair daintily (they did not call it Venetian red in those days). She brought it rather low in front of her ears, then suddenly swept it rippling back into a smooth coil at the back of her head. The coil was, at least, as smooth as circumstances would allow. A rather placid-looking girl was your first thought. Not much fun in *her*—until you heard her views on the follies of your sex, when you changed your opinion. At such times the smallest, evenest, whitest teeth in the world would smile out upon you with a kind of joyous malice, and Alf Hazel or Harry Quarll would have their manœuvres unmasked with laughing frankness, so that the listeners, always feminine and sympathetic, laughed too.

Ede Dillingham was popular with her own sex and age, which is saying a good deal in Thorsby, considering Ede's chances. She never poached on preserved waters; she never took anybody's "young man" away from them. If such a one "came round," Edith could be trusted to tell him what she thought of him. She was trusted, too, with secrets. She was the only one of all the Dillinghams whose family name was never contracted. Ned Dillam mostly—Sue and Will Dillam always—Mrs. Dillam, with the addition of the adjective "poor," on account

of her keeping the house so much! But Edith *Dillingham* invariably.

"I like my nice friends to call me Ede," she said; "but I won't have it from every young whipper-snapper who happens to know you, Will or Sue. I like to choose my friends for myself."

So that at an early period she informed Will that their friendships were to be kept in watertight compartments. He was not to know her friends unless they so chose. She was not to be compelled to acknowledge his.

"Look here, Ede," argued Master Will, looking to his advancement in the office, "there are as good fellows about our shop as among the girls' brothers at your old school. You think that, because father gave you a bit more education than the rest of us, you are away up the ladder. But we'll show you! I tell you, Alf Hazel is worth a dozen of young Salveson of the Manor any day. He could knock him out in two rounds!"

In saying this Master Will was wrong, but Edith took different ground.

"See, Will," she said, "I don't want to quarrel. I work just as hard at home as you do at the office, or father with his horses at the yard. On washing-days I work a deal harder than either of you. Now, I get no wages; father gives me something to dress on. I buy the stuff, and make them myself. Now, as it happens, I know some nice girls, and they like me to go and see them. Sometimes they come and see me too—mother and me. If you are here when they come, you can speak to them, of course, and as much as you like. But, for instance, I know you were making up to the Fentons' cook last half-year. So I won't have you speaking to Nelly Fenton in the street. Now, do you hear me?"

"You always were a prig, Ede!" said her brother contemptuously. "You are now, and you always were!"

"Very likely," said Edith, with her eyes on the seam. "You play your own game, Will, my friend, and I'll play mine. I've told you, that's all. It's all I ask of you, and you know very well I give you a hand with father many a time, besides other things!"

But Will was not so easily appeased. He patted the carpet nervously with his foot, looking down on Edith with a just-wouldn't-I-if-I-dared expression, which was partly caused by his prominent blue eyes and partly by a determination to make Ede pay for being "superior."

"Nelly Fenton's mother's cook is every bit as good as Nelly Fenton any day," he burst out, "if not better. You daren't go to father with stuck-up rubbish like that. He's an out-and-outer, is father—a kind of Socialist, I believe. He would take you up pretty smart if you tried on any of that nonsense with him."

"Father is a gentleman in his way, though he drives a railway team," said Edith sweetly. "He takes off his hat to a lady, if the lady bows to him. But he doesn't force himself on any one. I am only trying to make his son a little bit like him! It's hard!"

"Look you here, Ede," said Will, exasperated out of measure, "this isn't your house, I believe. I suppose your ladyship will allow so much. It's mine just as much, and if you don't want me to speak to any of your fine friends—why, tell them to stop away, that's all! I'll do as *I* like!"

But, alas! he had forgotten that Moon-Washington walls are thin, and that one can hear a good deal through an open window. So it came to pass that a voice fell upon Master Will's ear at the close of this family explanation with his sister.

"Here, young 'un," remarked the out-and-outer from the yard, "that is no way to speak to your elder sister. If I hear you at it again, I'll stuff your head in a bucket!"

The threat was no mere form of words. Master

Will shivered still at a recollection. He had a high and very stiff collar on at that time, and it hurt. Even the remembrance did.

"You heard what I said?" thundered the out-and-outer, taking a step nearer.

"Yes, father!" cried the bucket-chastened young man.

"Heed, then!" said his father briefly, with which admonition the incident was closed.

But nevertheless Will's passing allusion to young Salveson had taken Edith rather aback. Yet it was but a random comparison after all. On one or two occasions Hubert had walked part of the way home from Mr. Marchbank's church with her mother and herself. The books in the window did not always act, because the good dame, her mother, had a habit of changing her mind at the last moment. Besides, it eased Edith Dillingham's conscience, and seemed to give a kind of regularity to the whole affair. Edith Dillingham did not like doing anything on the sly, though sometimes she did. But she was in mind and thought a great deal above her surroundings, and, having been at school with his cousin, she did not see any reason why young Mr. Salveson of the Manor should not be friends with her. So it delighted her, even partially, to regularise the situation.

"Mother," she said, the first time when they all met coming out of an evening service at the Presbyterian Kirk of Thorsby, "this is Mr. Hubert Salveson, Dr. Salveson's second son—you remember him, don't you? He remembers you."

The young man saluted, gravely raising his hat and smiling respectfully.

"You used to be very kind to me when you lived down on the front," he affirmed brazenly—"jam and sugar on slices of bread and butter. You remember when I was not allowed to eat between meals. 'Jam-butties,' we used to call them, Tim and I! Tim never got many; I used to fight him for them."

The good old lady could not quite remember Hubert's face, but the thing was likely enough. She had a reputation that way, and her former house had been just on the marches of the Manor House, in which the Salveson boys had passed their youth.

"That was where I met Edith," he went on, quickly and cleverly; "won't you take my arm, Mrs. Dillingham, at least till we get in shelter of the houses? The streets are slippery."

"It does blow a bit, but—but——"

"Do," said Hubert eagerly, looking at her with heightened colour, and sliding his slim umbrella over her head. "Miss Edith, there, can take care of herself. Let me pilot you. It's a nasty crossing, this, when the South Dene boats are coming in and the streets are crowded."

He chattered on, talking to the old lady with a certain vivid ease. He contented himself with an occasional glance now and again at Edith. He also had good reason to be content, for that young lady was smiling, well pleased. She felt faint, strange drawings of the springs of life towards the young man who could be so gracious to her mother.

Perhaps Mr. Hubert Salveson had the ready sympathy to understand this. Who knows? Such things are instinctive with some men from boyhood to the grave.

If you had asked Hubert he would have said, "Oh yes, of course I do it for Edith's sake. But then what is there that I *don't* do for her sake?"

He parted with them at the corner of Cheviot Road. The shower had passed. The gaslights, just beginning to glimmer, made lustrously golden the tangles of the young girl's hair. He stood and looked after them.

That night, on going in, with one accord, and without consulting each other, mother and daughter said nothing about the matter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE O.C. CLUB

NEVERTHELESS Hubert Salveson felt that he had made a distinct advance. He repeated this over and over to himself as he strolled homeward—slowly, very slowly homeward, as men do at such times! The world seemed so very empty. But there were the lilac-tinged cloud-banks of easterly storm scudding towards him over the house-crowned heights of South Dene, across the wide tidal river. A big liner slowly went by to her berth. Red, black, and white were the stripes on her funnel, though he could see the Red Jack blown out taut over her stern.

Hubert knew it was the Hamburg boat, knew it without looking, as he knew that two and two made four, or that he was to be a doctor and his brother a barrister. As to this last, old Dr. Salveson had not consulted either Tim or Hubert. He had pronounced views on prophecy, and had made a special visit to the Mount of Olives, where the matter had been made clear to him. His procedure was simple.

One of his boys was to be a lawyer, the other a doctor. The spinning of a coin decided which was to be which.

He might as well have stayed at home and settled in his parlour, quoth the ignorant. Ah, but wait! The place was the Mount of Olives, which, against all foolish-minded critics, he held to be the true Mountain of Illumination and Transfiguration, while the coin was a genuine shekel (made two years

before in Birmingham, and sold to the confiding for twenty times its weight in gold).

> The bust outlasts the throne,
> The coin, Tiberius.

Dr. Salveson quoted the lines with a fine fervour. For he was a well-read man, though an Indian sun had given a curious turn to his views on revealed religion and the forestalling of future events. The walls of his study were covered with charts and curious models to account for all that was going to happen, and he alone knew how to reconcile Daniel and the Revelation. It is whispered that his method with these divergent prophetical authorities was as simple as his manner of deciding the fates of his two sons. When one did not appear to agree with the other, up went the silver shekel. And it was so.

Withal, and in spite of certain terrible pictures of Palestine which he commanded you to admire, he was a fine, generous, free-spoken old Christian gentleman of the school now entered into its rest. If he erred, it was chiefly upon the interpretation of the tenth and little horns. In his youth (so they say) he had been something of a gay dog. But now, having turned the age limit, and the sun of India having (as aforesaid) prophetically excited certain brain-lobes and volutes, he was resolved that his own puppies should be kept well in leash. That is to say, Timothy and Hubert Salveson were to begin where he had ended.

The Manor was a big, roomy house, three times too large for the requirements of the two youths and their father. An Aunt Kidson, of a degree of blood-relationship profoundly vague, kept house for them—a grim-mouthed, murky-eyed old woman, who frequently opened the door herself to visitors, and scared them off the doorstep with the sole venom of her glance if they asked for the doctor, or froze them with icy disapproval if they came in search of Tim or Hubert.

Aunt Kidson had at some remote period been christened Abigail, if such a woman could be said to bear a Christian name of any kind. There were yet vaguer memories of an "Uncle Kidson," who departed for a better and certainly happier world "at the early age of 49," as a tombstone in East Dene cemetery affirmed with a luxury of detail, and the remarkable verse engraved thereon:

> His wife, resigned beneath the blow,
> Remains to weep him here below;
> And in the world where all is love
> He waits her coming there above.
>
> (Signed) ABIGAIL KIDSON.

But those best informed thought otherwise. Even the doctor, in his hours of ease, whispered that he would not blame Jim Kidson if he used his interest with the authorities, and emigrated to some outlying track, between which and the well-trodden Elysian fields no extradition treaty of any sort had yet been framed.

But Mrs. Kidson had friends of her own—sex, temper, temperament, if not with all her concentrated capacity for evil-speaking and general intolerance. There was Miss Fly, commonly called "Fly Blister" by the irreverent. She kept "St. Aldegonda's," a rest-house (on High Church principles) for invalids, nurses temporarily out of employment, and the better class of domestics. The idea was her own, and an admirable one it was—for Miss Fly. You see, it worked thus. The nurses waited on the invalids—just to keep their hands in; the upper domestics washed, dusted, cleaned up, ironed—for a like reason. The legend, so noble and helpful, "Work Makes Happiness," was illuminated in Old English capitals over every doorway, in letters of gold and green. A lady artist had stayed there temporarily. Then, of course, all paid back (when in work) what their benefactress had spent upon their lodging. Each nurse paid 50 per cent. of her wages till she stood clear on Miss Fly's

books, by which time she was generally out of a place again. The upper domestics did the same, though, as their rate of wage-earning was slower, Miss Fly felt herself obliged to take two-thirds of their emoluments. And, of course, as in every well-regulated establishment, the invalids paid weekly and sweetly—as who would not be glad to do for such excellent if varied service, with the society of the admirable Miss Fly thrown in?

Then there was Mrs. Skipton, caretaker at Girnagain, profanely called by the Salveson boys, "Mother Shipton," because (so they declared) she tried to "suck in" with their father, by bringing him desperate and distressing Bel-and-the-Dragon pictures, and prophecies as to the near fate of the world, calculated to make the least serious consider their ways.

If the Salveson boys could "sneak" these, they used to ornament with them the walls of their work-room, altering the heads of the most uncanny beasts to resemble Miss Fly, Mother Shipton, and even their father's own housekeeper, Aunt Kidson herself.

These caricatures, however, cannot have been very striking likenesses. For that lady often looked at her own image "cavorting" over the ten kingdoms of the earth armed with teeth of iron and brass (together with a widow's cap as a helmet), without discovering any resemblance whatsoever.

She only said she was pleased to see the young men taking an interest in serious subjects. Their general conduct was very far indeed from leading her to suppose such a thing possible. Privately also she did not approve of the caretaker at Girnagain supplying the doctor with his favourite literature. She might prove a supplanter.

They might have been found out if their father had paid any attention to their wall decorations, which he never did—only visiting their "den" in

quest of some tool of his which they had "sneaked" out of his summer-house work-room. He entered like a whirlwind, routed about till he found what he wanted, pronounced anathema, and was gone in the slamming of a door.

The weekly gathering of the "Old Cats' Club," as the boys called these reunions, were mostly held from three to five on a Friday afternoon. Aunt Kidson was free then till dinner-time. Miss Fly had done her forenoon's "blistering" among her "idle" nurses, "lazy" domestics, "incompetent" tradesmen, "cheating" purveyors, and "ungrateful" invalids. She had need of a restorative cup of (some one else's) tea. Mrs. Skipton was always free to gather or retail ill-natured gossip, except during the intervals which she spent in inventing it.

Draw about the fire, in spite of the Easter weather. There is always a Baltic chill about bleak Thorsby. The Old Cats' Club is in séance. There is no reading of minutes. All the world of scandal is their oyster, and though the old is not so piquant as the new, it is perhaps, on the whole, more satisfying. There is more "cut and come again" about an old scandal.

But, all the same, there was generally something quite new at the O.C. Club, as there was in the outdoor club-house of the Athenians on the Hill of Mars. Each member was at liberty to bring a well-primed friend, who, if she proved communicative, would be invited again, and as the tea was Dr. Salveson's, the extra hospitality mattered nothing.

They began, almost cautiously, with old, well-worn topics first. When was Mr. Marchbanks going to get married? It did not "become a minister, going from house to house in attendance upon the sick of both sexes, to put off the matter so long."

Sad to relate, the remainder has been lost. But even as they stand, the lines contain a noble moral

in brief, as to the importance of the strifes of High and Low, in times when all creeds and churches are upon their trials.

A newcomer to the O.C. Club (as by Aunt Kitson established) was emboldened to break the silence with startling news.

"That upsetting piece, the atheist's daughter, who used to live down this way—what *is* her name?" (though she knew very well).

"Oh, yes, *we* know," exclaimed with unanimity the O.C. Club. "Edith Dillingham, she calls herself!" As if the parish register called her Mary Brown.

And the O.C.C.'s waited expectant the record of poor Edith's latest misdemeanour.

Now Mrs. Simon Waddleham, the new-comer, felt elated. Every eye was upon her. She was about to justify a possible election to the O.C. Club by the slaughter of a reputation—as members of the "Silver Skull" had to prove two single-handed unprovoked murders before receiving their talisman and card of membership.

"Edith Dillingham," she repeated slowly, "'as been *and* refused Alf Hazel, as is first draftsman in Pritchard's yard, and can earn—good week and bad week—his four gold soverings. What he saw in her I can't think. But I had it from the pore young man's own feymale cousin, 'Lizbeth Hazel, wot is fitted to be a comfort to any man, if her nose *was* squeezed flat when a babby, by falling out of a first-floor window, waiting to see the firemen go by, to put out no fire at all, but only all because the Mayor and the Corporation had turned them out to show Mister Gladstone (who was 'avin' his lunch at the Town Hall) how smart they could come up to t' scratch, with their brass helmicks and fire-brick trowsers, and all and all!"

The O.C. Club appreciated the news, but felt that the new-comer's tendency to diffuseness must be checked. Aunt Kidson took that upon herself.

"We like to speak our minds here, Mrs. Waddleham," she said; "and as our time is limited, we can't begin with Adam and Eve every time we tell a tale. We are obliged for the news as to Alf Hazel and Edith Dillingham. It is what we should have expected. That girl will come to no good; but we don't know anything about the other Hazel with the flat nose, and what's more, we don't want to! One idiot of that name is quite enough!"

"I was only telling you," said Mrs. Waddleham, feeling her nomination slipping away from her, "and I had it from first hand, as one might say—so being as 'Lizbeth Hazel 'as 'ad 'opes for ten years that Alf might draw up alongside o' her, an' make one team of it, as it were!"

The O.C. Club felt that this would never do. Mrs. Waddleham's mode of expressing herself was low—"draw up alongside o' her," indeed! They were not used to such language. Aunt Kidson looked severely across at Mrs. Skipton, who had brought her.

About this time the O.C. Club usually partook of an intimate little "taste" of "somethink" esoteric from a curiously-shaped bottle out of Mrs. Kidson's cupboard. But on this occasion the hostess hesitated. She would pay Mother Shipton out by letting her depart unenlivened, while she would signal Miss Fry to stop behind for a private sight of the quaintly shaped green bottle.

Then, as even her introducer looked askance at her, poor Mrs. Waddleham staked her all on a desperate throw.

"Yes, and I know the *reason* why that Dillingham girl refused Alf Hazel, as is so much above her. It is because young Master Hubert Salveson, of this very house, sees her home from t' Presbyterian Meeting House in Kingdom Come Lane every Sunday night! There!"

CHAPTER IX

"D.O.M."

THUNDERBOLT, earthquake, hurricane, volcanic eruption, shrapnel, torpedo, floating mine, lyddite—all means of destruction, human and divine—are mere mild incidents to a malevolent tongue. The unruly evil is still untamed, blighting, poisonous, blasting, fatal.

Mrs. Simon Waddleham sat back preening herself, proud of the sensation she had caused. Mother Shipton nodded across at her. She had nobly vindicated her introducer. But Aunt Kidson was critical, even hostile.

Upon occasion, indeed, she could receive, and even propagate, an unfounded and libellous assertion with any one. And even now, had Edith Dillingham only been concerned, she would have passed on the tale, like the French lady's kiss, "revised, corrected, and considerably augmented." But since "the House" was concerned, the affair wore a different aspect. The honour of the manor was at stake. Also a thought, long simmering in her brain, now appeared ready for the table, as it were. If only—only—she could sow dissension between the doctor and his two sons, her portion might be considerably increased. She would begin with Hubert. She had visions of a temptestuous parent and of the traditional "cutting off with a shilling." "Residual" and even "Universal legatee" became by no means vain or impossible words. Dr. Salveson was an old man. He was very passionate and headstrong, and the young men—well, would be young men. Proof

—proof was what she needed. And to get it she proceeded to cross-examine Mrs. Simon Waddleham.

"And, pray, who was there to certify that? It is a serious charge to bring against any young man."

Mrs. Waddleham laughed. She felt now the strength of her position, and was inclined to take advantage.

"Serious charge? Pshaw! nonsense!" she said, glancing up at the cupboard (of whose fame she had heard) with an expectant and almost commanding eye. "I am old enough to remember the doctor, his father, when he came back from college, afore he was packed off to Injy by his pa. Lor'!"

And she laughed again, clapping her solid knees at the jovial remembrance.

"He were a oner! 'Ow he did go on! Why, I remember when him and Ted Cripps, that made a fortune out of tallow and lost it all in one day on Dene Heath racecourse——"

"These reminiscences are most unbecoming this house," said Aunt Kidson, with her nose in the air. "Pray consider my relationship with the gentleman whose name you soil with your lips—I mean with those aspersions. In short, let me hear no evil-speaking of the honoured and intimate kinsman whose tea we are drinking——"

"An' very good tea it is, ma'am," said Mrs. Waddleham propitiatingly.

"Or out you go!" continued Aunt Kidson, unappeased.

"But then we would hear nothing about the young gentleman," insinuated Miss Fly, "and I'm sure you desire to be a mother to him, poor young man."

"We all do!" cried the O.C. Club, with a unanimity seldom displayed by them in a good cause; "we would all be mothers to him."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Kidson tartly; "he is sufficiently supplied so long as, by the will and

desire of Doctor Heathcote Charles Salveson, I am mistress of this house."

She did not approve of all these widows and ancient maidens, even though friends of her own, becoming so interested and maternal over the sons of the wealthy Indian ex-surgeon-general. But details she must have at any price; and at last, unable to avoid the persistent glances which went cupboardwards with such regularity, she produced the celebrated fat bottle.

"So excellent for the digestion, they do tell me," sighed the Widow Skipton's friend. "I have heard speak of it often, but little did I think that these eyes would hever gaze upon it—not in this life."

"Made and bottled by holy men 'at the convent.' See, it is marked on the bottle with their motto," said the hostess in a whisper.

"D.O.M.," spelt out Mrs. Waddleham, pronouncing the resultant word with a strong North-country gusto, reminiscent of her late husband. "What a funny motto for holy men like them at that 'ere convent."

"Ah," sighed again Miss Fly, lifting up her mittened left hand with a kind of saintly rebuke, "but it doesn't mean what *you* think, madam. The idea!"

Mrs. Waddleham laughed. "Then what *does* it mean?" she demanded. She held trump-cards, and knew it.

"That I don't know, not exactly," Miss Fly answered lamely; "but it's something they put on flags and banners when they have processions in the streets in them countries."

"It's wot *I've heard* a good many say as them very processions went by in this country—good Church-people they was, too, that said it!" cried Mrs. Waddleham, laying herself back in her worn hair-cloth chair so that she could laugh the more comfortably. "My 'usband that was, an' my own

brother, Joseph Challoner, that is, never did hold wi' them new-fangled Papish ways."

Certainly Mrs. Waddleham (née Challoner) was low. Her manner, language, *and* connections proved it. But——

"Will you accept a glass of this original Benedictine?" said the hostess, with due dignity, a certain severity underlying the invitation.

Mrs. Waddleham picked up the glass between her fingers, and regarded it with contempt, mixed with amusement.

"You needn't drop it into this for me to taste," she said. "I am sure to like it. I will take a proper glass now."

"This *is* a proper glass," said Aunt Kidson, with immense dignity.

"Yes, for medicine." Mrs. Waddleham held the V-shaped little liqueur glass between her and the light, pretending to make out the markings. "Why, it doesn't hold even a tablespoonful," she said. "In my time I've been a nurse—by the month—and I know. I'll take mine in a teacup, if you please!"

They all felt that the newcomer was irretrievably *low*. Even Mother Shipton, co-religionary and introducer, blushed for Mrs. Simon Waddleham.

Yet she held out her teacup to the lady of the house, who was pale with rage. And what is more, she got it filled to the brim. Then, with one mind, they envied her; for they had not got as much out of that curiously sealed bottle in a twelvemonth!

"Well, and about Mr. Hubert?" whispered Miss Fly insinuatingly.

"I don't think much o' this stoof," said Mrs. Waddleham. "Things like that gets cracked up, because they are sold in bottles with swear words on 'em. But give me good, honest London gin, unsweetened; that's my taste, and I don't care who knows it. Not that this 'ere D.O.M. stoof mightn't be aw'right if one got enough of it to turn over in one's mouth!"

"It's a liqueur, and very valuable," said Miss Fly. "It requires a cultivated palate——"

"Eh, wot?" said Mrs. Waddleham; "wot's that—more swearing?"

"It means," said Aunt Kidson, in austere tones, never before known to fail, "that to appreciate it, one must have good taste."

"Taste?" quoth Mrs. Waddleham; "is it taste? Why, this hasn't none"—she smacked her lips—"not no more nor so much soapy water flavoured with red herring and goose grease!"

Miss Fly tapped her brow behind Mrs. Waddleham's back as an intimation to the hostess that the "stoof" had gone to the visitor's head, and that she had better be treated gently accordingly.

"About that there Edith Dillingham. What was it you said?—very interesting it was," suggested Miss Fly, still more soothingly.

But Mrs. Simon Waddleham's pacific mood had passed.

"I said nothing," she cried. "I doan't know such people—my brother Jo does, though. You can ask 'im. He'll give you your answer. Very straight is Jo. You ask 'im—if you want to know."

"But you said yourself," purred Miss Fly. Was it possible that their prey was about to escape them, after all?

"Said myself, did I? I said nothing. I tell you again. But I seed you a mocking o' me, making faces behind my back—yah—catched you at it. You don't even know what looking-glasses are for, I suppose? What's that to you, anyway, Miss Fly Blister? You and your take-in-shop. Eh! Answer me that! Hey—you can't. You want to know what I think about you all?"

Apparently nobody was anxious.

"Well, you're a lot of rare old tabbies. Gimme my retticule, and be good enough to see if my kerridge an' pair is at the door. Gooo—oood-night, tabbies!

I was only 'avin' you on a bit—just to see what you would swallow. An' what 'arm would there be if and supposin' a decent young man walked home from meetin' with a respectable young woman? I suppose it 'as 'appened afore—though maybe not to the likes o' you! Not to look at ye, it wouldn't."

"Come away, Maria, do!" pleaded her friend and introducer, feeling her responsibility in the matter rapidly increasing.

"I'll come w'en I'm ready—not afore." This defiantly. "There's not one o' yer that could put me out, if it were my mind to stay. Would you, Missus Kidson, with your pore, wizened, vinegar face? Or you, Fly Blister, would you like to have a try? No, not you, nor all of them pore nusses o' yourn, wot you robs of every penny they arns! God help them that gets into your hands.

"Oh, yes, I'm goin', Missus Albert Eddard Skippon—I'm goin'. An' it'll be a long day an' a short 'un afore I puts my feet in this 'ere 'ouse! I don't go w'ere I'm not welcome. But if any of you has a word to say to Maria Waddleham, say it now afore she goes. For if it comes to her ears after—better for you that you had got under the big steam hammer down yonder at Pritchard's. Young people—of course, ten times better than you—ugh—I can't abear you!"

And the big woman, with the black basket in her left hand and her right cleared for action, went out, pausing only to hurl a last defiance at the discomfited party in the housekeeper's parlour of the Manor House.

"Only say so, you know, if you 'ave a desire to 'ave it out!"

None of them said it, however, so the virago, widow of famous fighting Simon of the aforesaid steam hammer, went out, quoting briefly and for the last time the inscription on the bottle of monastic liquor on the table.

CHAPTER X

BREAKING OR BINDING

AS the summer advanced Edith Dillingham continued to take the longer road to the farm beyond the common, to seek fresh eggs, which were her mother's chief daily pleasure. Mrs. Ned Dillingham took her younger daughter Sue, and went to the big new market at Thorsby. She herself went in the tram both ways. She carried the heavier of the baskets, and if the conductor happened to be "a nice man," he would let her stay beside her baskets, as it were, in the verandah of the car. If not, Sue sulked in the fairway, and told the world in general her opinion of that conductor, his appearance, physiognomy, and general character. He generally told the driver to hurry up a bit.

"That'un," he remarked, "is a real chip of the old block—an out-an'-outer, if ever there was one. God pity the man that should marry her."

Meanwhile Edith took her way by Church Lane, Ashton Willows, and Lower Binfield, turned into Farne Hollow, and so to Cheasely Farm. She had never again seen Mr. Richard Jones, otherwise Wood. *Per contra*, not a Saturday passed that she did not see Hubert Salveson.

But she came suddenly to that understanding with him which is known in diplomacy as a "working agreement."

"I like you, Hubert," she began, with that tranquil expression of calm blue eyes which led many to imagine that they might presume on her good nature—always to their cost and sorrow. "Yes, I

like you. And if we walked over Farne Height every Saturday forenoon, you and I together, it would be pleasant enough, I do not deny—better than dirty lanes and slippery pavements. I used to enjoy seeing the water shining, and the ships coming and going——"

"If I am keeping you from all that——" began Hubert, instantly ruffled.

Edith put out her hand towards him a little waveringly, and then drew it back. They were passing the long dead walls of Patten's Furniture Stores, in which were no windows to the street, but only great arches pierced for the entrances and exits of mammoth vans.

"Silly!" she said softly. And prompt at the word Hubert came obediently into line again. "You know I did not mean that. But, though we are friends, there must be a limit. You are a rich man's son; I, a working-man's daughter."

"What has that got to do with it?" said Hubert, lowering suddenly, his eyes straight before him.

She smiled wistfully at his dour visage. But she kept on, because she knew she was in the right.

"It has everything to do with it," she said. "I am not going to be compromised just because I went to school with your cousin Amy (whom you ought even now to be sitting at the feet of), and because once on a time you helped me to carry Baby Sue to Green Lane station!"

"I don't see where the difference comes in," argued Hubert. "If I went with my cousin Amy every day across Farne Height, nobody would have a word to say; but I want to go with you."

"That is just it," said Edith quietly; "and you see the reason very well—that is, if you are willing to see. We can be friends, you and I, but it must be at a distance. A working-man's daughter, who lives in a cottage house only half paid for, may be spoiled for her own class by some extra education

and a little reading; but that does not make her mount into yours."

"You are far better and cleverer than my cousin Amy, or any girl I know." Hubert was blustering now. He felt instinctively that he was bound to get the worst of it.

"Hubert," said Edith, with a peculiar stillness in her tone, "listen. I have something to say to you, which has been on my mind for a long time. I have been wrong in letting you meet me. You have been wrong in coming without telling your father. And mother—poor mother!—has been a little wrong too, for she has not said anything to my father. We have all been wrong—I the most, because I always knew—yes, from the first I knew that nothing could come of it."

What might have been vanity in another was plain statement of fact to Edith Dillingham.

Silently Hubert walked by her side, his face working, but otherwise very stern and grave. It seemed to him as if the end of all things had arrived. They were coming up out of the little hollow called Boggart Clough, which in its turn leads past many old-fashioned cottages into Binfield Bottom, and so out at last upon Church Lane. Much was waste land, but there were many cottage gardens and walled orchards all along the way.

Edith held to her explanation. Her mind was fixed to make an end. "No; I have been wrong—far the most wrong," she said, "but now I am going to do the right. You are wasting your time, Hubert. You have a profession. Get away from here; find a place, and get to work."

"My father will not give me the money to buy a practice," he answered gloomily, "and what chance is there for a fellow going on spec to one place or another already overstocked, and putting up his door-plate? It is only sitting down to wait for patients who never come—and if they do, never pay!"

"I have heard of partnerships with old men who do not wish night work," suggested practical Edith.

"Not to be had," said Hubert, biting at the finger of his glove; "scores of fellows with flaming testimonials after every one of these!"

"Well," said Edith, "I've heard my father say that there never was a good job yet that came knocking at a man's door, and begging him to have it. And I'm sure you will never get on waiting about for me to go to church on Sundays, to lecture on Thurdays, or the long walk to Cheasely Farm on Saturdays."

"If I am in your way," said Hubert doggedly, wilfully ignoring the better voice within him, "I can easily get out, you know."

Edith Dillingham laid a hand gently on his sleeve.

"That was not spoken like my old comrade of the Station, who picked the spikes out at the corners, so that we could hold up the babes together, to see the fast ones go by. I think you are putting in the nails—and needlessly."

Hubert gave way.

"Then what would you have me to do?" he asked, with a kind of sob in his voice. It sometimes happens that women are the stronger on such occasions. Men, being stupid, say that it is owing to hard-heartedness.

"I will not have any misunderstandings," said Edith, turning quickly upon him, as they paused under the great ash at the corner of the Binfield Bottoms, where the cinder-path is broad and sheltered. "I can't even bear to read books with misunderstandings in them. 'Silly people,' I always say; 'why don't they speak, and clear the thing up.' At any rate, I'm going to be plain with you. This is our last walk, Hubert, until things are different. I will tell my father the next time you and I meet

one another. I expect that you will do the same!"

"Edith, I love you!" said Hubert suddenly, grasping her wrist hard. "I cannot lose you for all the fathers in the world. I have lived on it. It has been my life, sleeping and waking all these months. Have pity on me, Edith! Don't send me away!"

The girl paled and paled until the rose fled from her lips. But her eyes kept their lustre. She had heard much the same thing by others, but never by one like Hubert, of whose reverence and truth she was sure. Her old comrade! Could she?

Yes, she could—she must. He must go. There was nothing else for it.

"Hubert," she said gently, "*love—love*—I hardly know what the word means. I have heard so many things called by that name which are not—love. I cannot say truly that I love you. I like you, certainly—better than any other man. But—I am not quite a girl. I have seen many hard things. One does, you know, living as we do. But I do not think that you are yet a man—a man as I am a woman. You have to prove yourself. Go out then, make a name, and I shall be proud of you—prouder than I dare tell you! Now, go!"

He flung the girl's wrist from him, angrily.

"You want to get rid of me! I'm in your way! I see it! Well, I will go, as you bid me. But remember, you will never see me again. You will never have a second offer——"

"What is that you offer me now, Hubert?" she said, the words falling clear and quiet, all the while looking at him out of two eyes of limpidest blue.

"What do I offer you?" the young man stammered.

"Yes, what?" she nodded.

"Why, love—all my love. I love you to distraction, Ede, my little Ede! Will you marry me

now, and risk all? I am of age—I can—I will!"

She flushed now, red as any rose, and, instead of the brilliance, something infinitely sweet and cloudily grey passed like mist over the morning of her eyes. But she bit her under-lip hard, and lo, it passed.

"Hubert," she said, "such words as yours are always worthy of any girl's respect, honestly spoken. But, my boy, it cannot be! It would not be fair to you."

How much older she seemed than he in that moment.

"Even supposing that I—cared—enough, how could I be sure that you would keep on loving me? I would take you out of your class. I would waste your life, drag you down, spoil your career——"

"All that is nothing, if I do not have you, Edith," said the young man.

Edith Dillingham let a little sigh escape her. It was so hard to make him understand. He would not, say what she would. She would be obliged to—to speak the other thing.

"Hubert, perhaps I am going to hurt you. God knows I do not mean to," she said very gently; "some day you will give me credit for that. But I have a pride too. And the man I marry (if I ever do) shall be a worker, a bread-earner. Even now I do all the work of a house—I have done it for years. See how my fingers are drawn and puckered with a fortnight's washing. To-night I shall have the ironing. It will take me till midnight. I shall be up at five again on Monday morning to get my father and my brother off. I could earn my living any day, even as I do now, but more easily. I could be a maid, a laundress, anything. But I would not live a day on the bounty of another—no, not if it were my own father, least of all perhaps if it were my own father, and I a young man!"

"I understand," said Hubert heavily; "you need say no more! But some day you will see that I too am a man."

And without leave-taking or salutation, he turned on his heel and tramped back to Thorsby. Edith continued her way, entered late with one egg broken, and was received by her mother's voice. "Why, girl, what is the matter?—you've been crying. Your eyes are all red. Oh, you've broken an egg again. I knew it. There it is. You are a careless monkey. I shall send Sue next Saturday instead of you!"

And Edith Dillingham was glad to let it go at that.

She had broken more than an egg.

CHAPTER XI

HUBERT SALVESON DISTURBS HIS FATHER

THESE mornings of late April the Manor House almost exaggerated its usual expression of shut monastic close, of cloistered ease grown a little drowsy—the self-sown early poppies only just touched to a darker cardinal by the Thorsby "smuts." You had to be careful in outdoor promenades at the manor. If, in a light summer suit, you leaned a casual elbow on the branch of a tree, the fuller had no art wherewith to white the result. This, indeed, was hardly Thorsby's fault. The over-river winds brought to Thorsby the produce of the high chimneys from the greater cities of North and East Dene, set on the opposite ridge, and scattered down by the sea.

Hubert had become almost as much of a recluse as Tim. Nevertheless his father, immersed in a new system of arranging the vials and trumpets (with all which he was on intimate terms, but which no doubt spitefully aggravated him no little at times), paid no heed to the vagaries of either of his sons. All that he asked was that they should leave him alone with his charts and models.

Not so his housekeeper. Aunt Kidson, with Miss Fly as a useful outdoor adjunct, formulated theory after theory as to the sudden stoppage of Master Hubert's pilgrimages. She resented it, just when she was beginning to get on his track, and when she and Miss Fly might really have made something of it between them. But she never once thought of the right reason, which was much too simple for her.

That Edith Dillingham had dismissed the son of the master of Thorsby Manor, the future owner of some acres of ruddy brick houses and factories—that never entered her mind. She did not trouble herself with the impossible. And Miss Fly—of the flies which own their prince—was like unto her.

Nevertheless, something great was stirring in the young man's heart during these beautiful spring days. He lay in an arbour with a medical book, but he did not read. In his mind was ever present the slight, tall, rounded figure of Edith Dillingham. In his ear sounded always the words of dismissal, cruel but (he owned it) just. "I can earn my living, I, a girl, and I will not marry any man who does not earn his!"

Project after project had flashed above the horizon of his mind, arisen, flowered, flushed his temples with hope, only to wither barren and unrealisable. Everything broke against the barrier of his father's absorption in the things of another world, and his reluctance to spend even a few of the gold pieces amassed or inherited in this.

Then Tim annoyed him. Tim liked to have the whole garden to himself, and fussed at Hubert's idleness till they had nearly come to blows. He would not have medical books and "cultures" and "dissection" lying about. They disturbed the beauty of his day-dreams. But slowly, in spite of Tim, and because of his father, a resolve grew up within him. After all, this was not life. Edith had spoken true. He lay in a green shade, but he could not, like Tim, be content with the green thoughts of a young man.

He heard from without the low growl of the ceaseless "works"—night-shift and day-shift, the pour of operatives along the streets—mornings, dinner-hours, and stopping-times. The rollicking of young apprentices, the sober confidences of men carrying home their wages to their wives—all made this

young man out-of-work discontented with himself and ill at ease. Often he would betake himself to the carriage-house. It was now empty. For on the eve of one of the dates fixed for the Final End of All Things, Dr. Salveson had got rid of his horses. Here Tim and Hubert, during a fit of unusual activity on the part of the elder, had fitted up a gymnasium, which, after the first day, Hubert only had used. The young man flung himself on the bars, drew himself up by one hand, then by the other, tried the Indian clubs, and then, after a quarter of an hour's sharp work, threw them down unbreathed.

"I am 'fit,'" he said, "more shame to me. Edith was right!" And he went upstairs and knocked at his father's door.

"Who is there? You cannot come in. I am busy!" exclaimed querulously a voice from within.

"It is I—Hubert!" said his son.

"Well, come in then," this impatiently, "but I warn you I am busy!"

Dr. Salveson was seated at his big table, cleared as usual of tablecloth, so that the charts and models might detach themselves clearly. It had not been polished, but retained the rough surface of planed wood. It was furrowed all over here and there with slots, some running parallel to Dr. Salveson's big study chair, and others at right angles. Into these slots slid small convenient metal frames for the support of authorities, commentaries, models, and bas-reliefs. Brass rods also screwed into holes, and being made hooked at the top, they carried, ready to the good ex-surgeon's eye, many violently coloured charts and diagrams. At his hand a revolving bookcase, containing a bound set of the famous prophetical periodical, "The Wrath to Come—How, Where, and When!"

"Good morning, father," said the son, with his usual deference, "I hate to disturb you, but I must speak to you, on a matter of infinite importance to myself."

The father signed and glanced at his papers piled a foot high on the great table.

"Speak quickly, then," he said, "for I am in the midst of a research, which is not only of infinitely more importance to me, but to all the world of poor perishing creatures. Year after year I did my best to patch up their bodies. Now, in the decline of my days, and with I know not how few years before me, I am striving to do something to save their souls."

To this Hubert answered nothing. But he wondered what relation there might be between soul-saving and that warm hushed parlour in which his father played at rebus and charade with that which none shall know till the Seals are opened.

"Father," he began, "this is serious for me. I am twenty-three, and I have never begun the active business of my profession. I am rusting before I have ever had a chance of being properly sharp. It is true I was house-surgeon for a while over at the North Dene Hospital. But you made me give up that, because of the class of men I had to associate with."

"Mere butchers," cried Dr. Salveson, "not an idea in their heads except 'sharpen the saw and fall to.'"

"Perhaps," said Hubert; "but since then I have done nothing."

"And pray, sir," said his father, "have I not frequently invited both your elder brother and yourself to assist me in my prophetical labours? It is your own fault if you are idle. Have you ever seen *me* idle? There is no need for you to do any work unbecoming of a Salveson of Thorsby Manor. You are here to keep me company in my old age, that is, you and Tim. I have but you two, and what I possess, together with what was left me by my elder brother, will one day be divided between you—that is, if you do as I ask you. And it is no difficult thing that I require of you—surely,

nothing unreasonable—to be your father's companion, when the wearisome but sacred labours to which he has vowed himself afford him time for human society!"

"Father," said Hubert abruptly, "what were you doing at twenty-three?"

His father stared at him with marked surprise. Never before had either of his sons addressed him in that tone. It was a thing to resent.

"At twenty-three—I was in India, sir, in South India—busy in a cholera camp, I daresay. They entered us pretty young in those days. But what is that to you?"

"Well, I want to go work—cholera camp or elsewhere," said Hubert. "It is all the same to me. I am not like Tim. I want to be doing things. You gave me a profession——"

"Yes," interrupted his father, "but you know very well that I never intended you to practise. It is one thing to take rank as the surgeon of a British regiment, and another to be a mere pill-and-potion dropper, the man with the black bag, the drug-seller with letters after his name that you would be here!"

"I do not care," said Hubert desperately, "let me work, father. Let me go. I do not care how or where I begin. I do not ask for any money, only for your permission. I will make up the pills. I will deliver the bottles—I don't care what I do. Only I want to begin, and if possible with my father's permission."

"Permission—permission," cried his father, getting angry for the first time; "I see you have been reading some humanitarian trash—Gospel of Work and so on! I tell you I only worked because I had to. I was the second son, as you are. But then, I had not such a father as you have. He gave me an education and told me to quit. He was glad to see the back of me. He never meant to give me another

farthing. Nor would he. All was to be for my elder brother. And so it would have been had he not died unmarried. Then I, like a wise man, sent in my papers at once and came home."

"But I want to work," repeated Hubert sullenly. He always stiffened his neck when talked to in that tone. Then, all suddenly, his father burst into flame.

"You are resisting me—yes, resisting and insulting my riper judgment. Moreover, you have taken up already more than three-quarters of an hour of time which I can never recover."

"I must begin somehow—begin now," continued Hubert sadly; "if you will not help me, then I must try for myself."

"Help you—the boy is crazy!" cried the old man, bringing his hand down on a lacquered tin paint-box, from which he was filling in his most recent map of the kingdoms of the earth, with Ireland's place finally arranged to every one's satisfaction as a dependency of Austro-Hungary. "Help you! Have I ever refused you anything? All my life? Speak."

"You have been very good, father," said Hubert quietly, "but—work of some kind I must have. I am choking here. I cannot stay."

"The reason—the reason?" cried the old man, starting up, "come—out with it! There is a reason!"

There was, but Hubert did not give it.

"Some girl—some woman," cried Dr. Salveson. "I had heard whispers! But I paid no attention to them. I trusted my boy. I honoured him too much. Is it because of the atheist's daughter—the railway lorryman's wench? Speak—let me have your reason!"

The old man nearly choked in his fury. His prophecy had not enabled him to foresee that.

"Yes, it is!" Hubert answered firmly, now that Edith had been mentioned; "that is, she will have

nothing to do with me. She made me promise to work, and I am going to!"

The old prophetical student came out from behind his big table, overturning a model of the stellar universe, designed to show in which particular constellation the Almighty dwelt. It crashed on the floor, but he paid no heed.

"Out of my house," he shouted, lifting his hand to strike; "out of my house. Kidson will send your baggage after you. My lawyer will tell you what my plans are for you. But never set your feet across this threshold again—you hear me? Never—never!"

"I hear you, father," said Hubert, "I never will!"

CHAPTER XII

HOME, SWEET HOME!

HUBERT passed through the garden. He had hurriedly flung his books and more precious belongings into a couple of dingy trunks, the same he had carried to and fro many times to Edinburgh during his college days. He locked them and went out.

The garden was surprisingly green and bright. It looked almost inviting for the first time. Some quality of tears somewhere—April skies, white far-sailing clouds, surprised him. They were not in his eyes, he was sure. He seemed to get a glimpse of Tim's dream world, about which he had never previously cared.

"Hallo, Spooner!"

"Hallo, Fat Boy!"

They exchanged their usual greetings amicably enough. Tim, book in hand, already with his father's manner upon him, was turning away towards an old thatched summer-house, in which he had rigged himself up a kind of sofa to lounge in and read.

His brother hailed him.

"Good-bye, Tim, I'm off!"

"All right—see you at lunch?"

"No!"

"At dinner then?"

"No," said Hubert, slowly coming nearer to his elder brother, who halted disconsolate at being interrupted, a forefinger thrust between the leaves of his thin book of verse. "No, Tim, lad, I'm never coming back. The governor's turned me out!"

"Chut, he doesn't mean it," said his brother easily; "you've been riling him, that's all! Stay away from lunch—turn up at dinner as if nothing was the matter. It'll be all right. Got any money?"

"Some," said Hubert doubtfully. He had not yet fronted the fact that now he would have to pay for his meals, and even for his bed that night. Tim took his old brown leather wallet out of his pocket, and shook his head dolefully.

"Doesn't keep us very rich, Hue," he said, after inspection: "hasn't paid me for three months—you neither, I suppose? Hold on, I'll go down and dig some out of old Kiddy! She owes us plenty."

In five minutes he returned with five pounds and some silver.

"I told her I knew who paid for the liquor and stuff they guzzle at their Old Cats' Club!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "She wouldn't like father to know about that!"

"Thank you, Fat Boy!" said the junior, with more gratitude than the look of the words conveys.

"What was it all about, at any rate? Can't I do anything?" inquired Tim.

Hubert informed him.

"Work? A girl—the little mite with the white pinafore at the Waterside long ago? Well, you *are* a fool!"

"Very likely!" said Hubert calmly. "I can't help it anyway, old man. I'm not made like you. A book, a pipe, and a garden-seat, and you are all right. I'm not, you see. I'm sick—sick as a dog going to be hanged. I must get work—if it's hod-carrying on the street!"

"Humph," quoth sceptical Tim, "you'll precious soon have enough of that! Mind when you were in the volunteers—fatigue duty in camp, and so on? But about the girl. Are you in love with her? Honest, now?"

"Of course I am!" said Hubert slowly. It is very difficult to make tender confessions to your elder brother—sisters are quite different. "I can't help it, that's sure. I can't live without her, I suppose."

"So you are going to work; dignity of labour, and all that, a shield under which to get at the old man! Look here, Hue, that's all nonsense, you know. You make love to her as much as ever you want to. Defy old Kiddy and her ugly sour-milk face! I know about her, and so long as you steer clear of father, and don't worry him for money, you can do almost anything you like. I've tried."

Hubert said something in a low, earnest tone.

"Won't have you unless you are a worker! Bah! And marry her! Bah, and Bah, and Bah! *I* know girls!"

Hubert kindled a little, yet knowing how useless it was to get angry with Tim.

"You don't know *this* girl," he said; "it is of Edith Dillingham I am speaking."

"Don't mount and ride, Hue," said his brother; "of course every fellow says that—the first time!"

"Tim," answered the junior, "about girls you know just what you have got out of books. You read poetry and that. But I'll wager that you never talked a straight hour to a girl in your life. If you have, give me her name. But I've been meeting Edith Dillingham for weeks. And it was she who broke with me—she wouldn't let me speak to her again till I found some work—and told my father!"

Tim's eye twinkled. He thought he saw the girl's "game." But he had the strong good sense not to put his thought into words.

"She's making a corner in herself to bull the market!" he said, under his breath. For, quaintly mixed with fiction and latter-day verse, this up-to-date young recluse kept an eye on the financial papers, and knew for how much he meant to sell

the Manor House and grounds to the new Thorsby Deep Sea Dock Company when the time came. Then he would go to Capri, wear a *kimono*, and be happy ever after.

"Well," he meditated aloud, "I suppose nothing I can say will stop you now till you've given the thing a trial?" he said, holding out his hand; "but look here, I'll have my 'quarterly' out of father this week—yours too, if I can make it work."

"Thank you, I do not wish a penny of his," answered Hubert. "He told me to go to Bixby and Garrett's, the lawyer fellows, but I——. As things are I can't take any of his money, you see!"

"Well, you have got nothing against me, at any rate," said Tim; "you can't refuse a loan from me, if there is need. Heaven knows, I've come down on you for a few shiners many a time and oft—on the Rialto, and elsewhere!"

"No, Tim; of course, if I get very much in a hole, I don't mind asking you. I will——"

"You promise?"

They clasped each other's hands, tighter than usual, their eyes meeting.

"Like a shot!" said Hubert.

"So long, Spooner!"

"So long, Fat Boy!"

And these two English brothers parted, as perhaps it is most fitting that brothers, differently but not antagonistically constituted, should part.

CHAPTER XIII

JAMES PRITCHARD AND JAMES PRITCHARD'S OFFICE

HUBERT clicked the iron gate of the Manor House behind him. He had been born there. He had come back there from school. Later, with a tutor, he had read and studied there. From college he had come back three times a year. Now he clicked the gate for the last time, he did not weep. No tear stood anywhere near his eye. There was just a heavy weight about his heart. His head ached—nervously, he knew. A couple of trunks stood roughly packed upstairs. Odd things of no value, belonging to him, littered the house, in this room and that. But no heart yearned for him, that he knew of. His father was long ago deep in his interrupted calculations. Aunt Kidson had always hated him—only Tim—yes—Tim was a good sort. Good-bye, old Tim!

And with some feeling of comfort he waved a hand towards the thatched house with the stubbly brown top, where he knew Tim to be ensconced. He would not have done it if he had imagined that Tim was looking. But, of course, Tim was on the sofa, stretched out with his legs on a chair, a book before his nose, his briar by his side.

Now Hubert made a mistake. At the moment of that salute towards the summer-house Tim was doing just what he was doing. But being English, the two brothers would have died, almost, rather than let each other see the small display of feeling. Nor did they ever speak of it after.

Hubert walked steadily down the little lane, turned

once to look at the manor, its upper windows glancing in the bright sun of April, and brightened by the reflection off the dancing waves in the tidal river. A servant was pulling down the white blind in his old room. And that was all. He was the Accursed, the son shut out. And his father would never see him afar off, in spite of the big Wray telescope with which he swept the stars, hoping to encounter the Inner Inmost where was the Throne, in some addled wisp of primæval light.

The fatted calf would never be killed for him. On the other hand Tim would never go out and sulk like the elder brother. He had five pounds in his pocket which Tim had wrenched from the tyrant—the thief who had made his boyhood a burden.

Curiously enough this thought also cheered him.

"Tim is a good sort!" he said aloud, and so turned the corner into King Street. Then he had to pass along Cheviot Road. From Cheviot Road, Bourne Street turned up at right angles, a long red defile, making nightly a double curve of gas-lamps over the hill that faced the estuary.

But Hubert gripped himself and would not look, though he knew to an exactness where number 109 came. And *she* might be entering. She might even be coming his way. But he held steadily on, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

Women clustered gossiping at doorways and over cottage railings. They said, "Look—young Mr. Salveson, from the manor—'im as was brought up to be a doctor, like his father. Precious little doctoring he'll need to do—as rich as a gold mine, my dears. And more than they can ask, as soon as they sell to the Dock Board—my old man, he sez so!"

But Hubert kept on his way. Young ladies out shopping glanced at him. It was a pity that he and his brother—particularly he—did not pay visits or go to dances. They kept themselves so dreadfully

to themselves—these Salvesons. But oh, how handsome! And they did say, *husssh*—no, it was impossible, a girl like that, living in a house at eight-and-six a week, and her father an atheist. But, of course all that would pass. It was nothing. He would be all the better for it. And so on—and so on. The early-sown-wild-oats theory does not vary in its statement, though it does as to its crop.

He was going in the direction of Pritchard's big yard, where he was pretty sure to find James Pritchard, senior, and indeed, sole partner, in his office any time from ten till five. True, Mr. Clarence and Mr. Egerton (named to please their mother, a first cousin to "titled people") drove up once a day—generally—in their automobiles. But the "Governor" never budged, and had his steak and potatoes done at the cook-house like one of the foremen.

He it was that Hubert meant to interview.

Within the great gates of Pritchard's building yard, five thousand workmen earned their bread in the sweat of five thousand brows. Other five thousand were scattered about at various engineering and repairing yards on both sides of the river.

No woman entered the place, even if her husband were dead or dying. She waited for the stretcher at the gate. James Pritchard had willed it. The yard was for work. Visitors, even, were discouraged. Into one corner ran a filmy spread of railway sidings, and the official railway "lorries" thundered past, drawn often by three or four horses, when it was a question of guns or armour. "Pritchard's" did a great deal of work for Foreign Powers, and there were clever men known to James Pritchard who did nothing but collect the money. It is little to say that in so doing they took their lives in their hands.

"Pritchard's" had one formula with such bad payers—chiefly South and Central American Powers.

"Pay up—or your ship will be blown up! We give you six months"—or twelve months, as the case might be. Revolutions were a speciality of the firm, but only in Island Republics. James Pritchard knew where he could lay his hand on as tough a set of fellows as the world held. He had made a fortune. And then, because he knew nothing equally interesting, he set to work and made another.

"Well, sir, and who are you?"

This was his greeting to Hubert as he entered the "den on stilts." It was hardly an appropriate name. James Pritchard's public office was a place of long and solemn counters, of much carefully selected material for writing, for scraping out writing, for filing letters, and finding when filed. There were mahogany doors, French-polished to a glassy surface. And upon everything reigned that austere and gloomy hush peculiar to every well-regulated "office."

Behind these doors dwelt chiefs of departments, designers, accountants, heads of sections. Swing-chairs supported their frames; mirrors reflected their correct visages, each patterned to salaries of from five to twelve hundred a year.

But James Pritchard's chamber was not of these. The head of works employing twelve to fifteen thousand men (roughly stated) kept his old place. It had been "run up for him" when on a vacant lot of useless riverine marsh he had started the repairing of coast-wise "Geordies." Then he built proper "colliers," buying the engines, and taking the risk of selling the finished article. The Crimean War came in the nick of time, when he was within an ace of shutting down. "My last thousand, sir!" James was fond of saying.

That cleared the yard out in a week. Moreover, he had more orders than he knew what to do with. Soon he was building ironclads for the allied govern-

ments, and for the other powers which were strengthening their marines with a view to eventualities. Then in the American Civil War he had many orders, some of which afterwards cost the country millions of money.

In the early sixties, James Pritchard, head of this young and growing concern, had deserted the refuge of rough planks out on the edge of the first slip, from which he had surveyed the last of the old-type battleships, and moved to an office of his own designing higher up the yard, away from the glowing clang of the riveting hammers and the falling thunder of the mallets.

It was a curious place even forty years ago, James Pritchard's office. It was built like a New Guinea house, on high piles, fourteen feet above the ground. It had windows on every side except towards the south, where was the mile-long retaining wall of the yard. He had a little telescope mounted on a stand, and (in these latter days) telephones to communicate with the heads of departments, who trembled when they heard his bell ring. And from thence, as from a crow's nest in a beech-tree, he surveyed the new world he had made on Thorsby Marsh.

Looking about him, Hubert saw stacks of plans, druggist's shopfuls of drawers—some broken as if with a hammer, when for any reason they refused to open quickly enough. He saw a carpetless floor, a rude stove stuffed with broken pencils, bits of sealing-wax, smashed ink bottles, torn envelopes. Beside it was a poker—if poker that could be called which had no claims to the respectable household name, save that it could poke, being merely a piece of iron bar hooked at one end and thrust into a lump of hard wood at the other. But it weighed seven pounds.

So whenever James Pritchard was displeased with a pen, a pencil, a letter he was writing, an ink bottle

which ran untimely dry—anything, in fact—he stuffed the offender into his stove and "mashed it" (the word is the only one) with this poker till his anger had evaporated. It was whispered in the yard that if you looked among the débris, which was taken away at intervals, secretly by night, you would find the braised bones of several heads of departments, and more than one inspector of government work!

Of this, however, there is no serious proof. What Hubert saw was a little, greyish man with hair standing erect, partly naturally, and partly because of its owner's constant habit of passing his fingers through it in an ascendant sense.

"My name, sir, is Hubert Salveson!"

"Hum—any friend of old Salveson's of the manor?"

"I am his son," said Hubert. "His younger son," he corrected.

The little bright grey eyes twinkled from under the peaked thatch of brindle he had on his eyebrows, in place of the usual arches.

"Well, what do you want with me? Surgeon-General Salveson's son didn't come here to say 'How do?' to James Pritchard. Do you want a job, eh?"

He laughed, throwing himself back in his chair at the idea.

"Yes, sir," said Hubert promptly, "that is just about what I do want. My father won't let me work!"

"By gosh!" exclaimed James Pritchard, staring. "Say that again, will you?"

"My father won't let me work," said Hubert, "and I mean to work, if I have to put a hod on my shoulder."

The little grey master of thousands straightened himself suddenly, and set half a dozen telephone bells working one after the other.

But the message was the same.

"I don't want to see anybody till further orders —Mr. Egerton there?—well, tell Mr. Egerton to——"

The telephone, being a correct official instrument, no doubt refused to transmit what followed without omission and revision.

James Pritchard dropped back in his chair, sighed, and looked a long time at the young man before him.

"This is no hoax?" he asked doubtfully; "remember, if you aren't Salveson of the Manor's son, I'll have you kicked out by the men in that shed yonder—and you'll remember the circumstances all your life long."

Hubert shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Most of them would know me, though you don't," he said. "I'm a doctor, like my father, and I've done a bit of tinkering at their hurts when I got a chance. Had nothing else to do; but now I'm not going to live any longer on my father, I am going to work for myself."

"Well, why come to me?" said James Pritchard. "Ask your father to set you up in a practice. He could buy the swellest over there in East Dene, and never miss the money."

"Perhaps," said Hubert, "but he won't do it, and I wouldn't take it."

"Had a row?" queried the head of Pritchard's, cocking his sharp little head to one side,—"like a blessed cockly-oly bird," said his irreverent sons when they got safely outside.

"I don't see what that has to do with the matter," he went on, "but in fact, my father offered me a choice between idling away my time till he died, or going out by the front gate. And I went!"

"Nothing else?" The little grey man's words clinked like pebbles dropped one by one into a tumbler.

"Yes—a girl," said Hubert.

The little grey man whistled a long, low, mellow, whistle, singularly young.

"Marry?" he demanded.

"Of course," said Hubert hotly, "that is, if she'll have me—won't unless I work, she says!"

"Ha!" said James Pritchard, scratching his chin, and staring steadily at Hubert, "says that, does she? Good girl! Sense in that!"

Then he changed the subject briskly, in a way that Hubert was not expecting.

"Look here," he said, "get your father to sell the manor lot to me instead of to the Dock Board, and I will give you any commission you like to ask that is in reason."

"I can take nothing to do with that, sir," said Hubert, eye to eye.

"Well, then, get him to hold on, and not sell at all—and I'll give you a thousand pounds down and a job. There's no harm in that!"

"I can do nothing. I have told you, sir. I am very sorry. I shall not again meet my father."

"Ha, not till quarter-day, that means—I know how it is when young men quarrel with their fathers!"

"No, nor at quarter-day. I have a friend who bosses a gang on the new waterworks. I can always get a job from him!"

"How much money have you?"

"Five pounds," said Hubert, with a gasp.

"Get it from your father?"

"No, my brother lent it me—gave it me, rather," said Hubert.

"Quarrel with him?"

"Oh, no, Tim and I are pretty good friends."

"*He* doesn't want to work, too, does he—no girl in his cup?"

"No," said Hubert simply, "he is a literary fellow in a way. He reads and all that. He doesn't fancy work much. He's a barrister!"

James Pritchard laughed his sharp crackling laugh, something like the fireworks known locally as "rip-raps."

"Just what I should have expected Salveson would make of his boys," he said, "a barrister who doesn't want ever to have a case, but worries over sonnets. And a doctor whom he won't let practise, even when he wants to!"

"You know my father?" said Hubert very gravely.

"I was once his father's groom, and we fought. I think he licked me. Anyway he never told, but went off to school with a black eye, just turning the colour of a green apple. Oh, there's good stuff in your father. But what's all this prophecy business, and lecturing with magic lanterns, and so on?"

"That is my father's business—I do not interfere with that!"

"You don't?"

"No, sir!"

"Well, ha, ha—you're a new type of son! I wish mine were built more on these designs. Work—girl to work for, speak no harm of your father, even when the old man kicks you downstairs! Hang it all. We must do something for you—now, what's your idea? Be sharp about it; for there are some dozen heads of departments, each as clever as Mister Gladstone, prancing about under the stork legs of this old shanty, and trying to keep from speaking to each other, so as not to swear. Now, what do you want? A fellow like you hasn't come to James Pritchard, asking him to do the thinking for you as well, I'll wager!"

"You have here five thousand men, and about a dozen accidents a day," began Hubert at once, calmly and clearly. "Across the river you have more. Now I am a surgeon—six months senior assistant at the accident ward over yonder at East Dene, two Edinburgh degrees, professor's dresser,

and so forth. You have to pay a lot for the hospital, I know; still more for your accident insurances. Now, half the men who go to hospital play off. What you want is somebody on the spot, who will be here at six and leave at six. First-aid surgeon and doctor, that's the idea—who will save you half your cases of illness or injury, and report exactly on each man's case, give evidence in the courts if the thing is exaggerated to stretch out the damages——"

"And how much do you want for all that?" the boss of Pritchard's lifted his grey and brindle head, cocking a cunning eye at the tall young man. "Leave it to me, I suppose?"

"No," said Hubert, "I want two pounds a week to begin with, till you find out if I pay you, a good little fire-brick operating room, the usual appliances, my medicines and bandages, of course. My instruments I have. Tim will send them to me!"

"Two pounds a week is no great shakes for a doctor," said James Pritchard; "my boys spend more than that on petrol! But still, all that runs into money. I think we will blood you first. There is a job as timekeeper at a pound a week which you can have. Will you take it?"

"No, sir," said Hubert, "not if afterwards I am to be the yard doctor. I could not keep the respect of the men."

"Good, again," said James Pritchard. "Off you go—you are engaged on trial. Let those fellows come up, else they will bite!"

He scribbled something on a paper, ending with a scrawl, which represented a very powerful signature indeed.

"There, doctor, I shall expect you to be in the office at six to-morrow. Tell them from me to have a room with a fire for you! And see here, bring me an estimate of your requirements. Now off with you!"

Hubert vanished down the iron stairs which led to the sanctum of shipbuilding omnipotence.

James Pritchard watched him stride across the rough ground of the yard, not picking his way, but taking everything as it came.

"I married at twenty-one—young fool—my first wife—ah——" he murmured, pausing to think, "and he wants to work—won't do nothing on his father's money. Lord, I wish I had a boy like that. But we must blood him—yes, blood him strong! We mustn't spoil him—his nose very hard to the grindstone, for a bit. Come up, you!"

Hubert passed the slip of paper to the gloomy cashier at the desk to which he was directed. He was treated as of some importance. He had been three-quarters of an hour with the boss, and had not been thrown out of the window.

"He must have been ordering an ironclad worth a million at the least—the agent of some good solvent government!" So ran the report.

"What," said the Scots cashier, "enter ye on the books—payment every Saturday—may I ask as what? What's your position in the yard?"

"Resident Surgeon!" said Hubert very curtly.

"Gosh!" said the Scotch cashier, for once startled out of his phlegm.

CHAPTER XIV

HUBERT TAKES HOLD

AS Hubert moved smartly across the yard, he kept his eyes about him. Here one and there another nodded to him. In a stained and dripping shed he saw a young apprentice handling a white lead mixer without gloves.

"Here, stop that," he said; "where are your gloves? Don't have any? I must see about that. Come to the office to-morrow at half-past six—you hear?"

An older man, evidently in charge of the job, moved up. He looked the young man over with a surly expression.

"What's that? What's your business with that boy?" he demanded.

"Just the same as my business with you," said Hubert, resolved to grasp his nettle at once, and to treat the five thousand men of Pritchard's yard as he would his ward in the Infirmary. "Let me see your hands."

"I'll let you feel them in your eye, if you give me any lip!" said the great fellow, clenching his fists at the word.

"Ah, you are a reduced foreman," said Hubert, with calmness. "I have heard they put them to the paint-mixing. I am Doctor Salveson, resident surgeon to this yard. For any further information you can apply to Mr. Pritchard. Let me see your fingers—I thought so. Come and see me to-morrow in the office at six-fifteen, and don't keep me waiting. Meantime get on your gloves, you and the whole gang. You will die in about four months, if you

don't. You may, as it is—from the look of your finger-tips. You will have to go to hospital, my man, with those nails!"

And he left them staring after him.

But he did not know that James Pritchard's little telescope was on him, and that the grey old badger in the "glass-house on stilts" was rubbing his hands gleefully as he squinted along the tube.

"Made Mobsy Higgs show his paws and get out his gloves! He will tumble, never fear! Right once more, James! Testimonials no good—all lies —put them in the fire—dance on them! Talk to a man and look him in the face while he is answering. That's the way to engage good men! Hey, you—next!"

Hubert came out on a clearer network of rails, spreading fan-shaped away to various "lies" and "sidings." He was just in time to see a railway delivery lorry drawn by three horses tear madly across, driving athwart the push-push of the "bunt-about" engines, and ultimately stopped upon one of the long trains of loaded cars. A granite post on the edge of the quay received the driver, who had been thrown off, after having valorously stuck to his horses till the last moment.

The man lay stunned on the hard kerb as Hubert ran up.

"One of them railway lorries—started by some fellow throwing red cinders out of one of our shunting engines. He'll get it when 'James' hears. What—if it isn't owd Ned Dillam, the out-and-outer! Well, he'll have found out by now whether he or the parson is right!"

"Stand out of the way," cried Hubert, excited to a cold professional serenity by the rush of life and death about him. "I am the doctor. Better shoot that leader horse. Cut the harness off the others. Open the way there!"

And he was by Ned Dillingham's side.

He was unconscious, dreadfully bruised, the blood trickling from under his tight, crisp, grey-sprinkled hair. But it was his laboured breathing, and a certain looseness about the arm which chiefly occupied him. In a minute he had him stripped, and was in need of bandages.

"Any about the place? What, that room there? Young Mr. Pritchard's dressing-room! There ought to be some shirts there. Bring them!"

He tore the unstarched parts into strips, and bound Ned Dillingham's right arm, lifting the shoulder where the great muscles had been torn.

A very smart young man hastily approached. He had left his motor in the newly erected shed, and he was going towards the private dressing-room when he caught sight of the throng.

"What—what are you doing with my shirts?" he cried. "I need one, I tell you—I shall not have time to go home to dress."

"This man needs them more," said Hubert, stitching away with a little crooked needle he had taken out of a pocket case of instruments in black leather, stamped with "Young, Edinburgh," inside the cover.

"But the man ought to have been taken out at once—there are stretchers for the purpose. We pay for the hospital," cried the young man, furious at the loss of his evening wear. "Who are you, anyway?" he cried, not recognising the busy surgeon.

"I am attending to my business," said Hubert, restraining a strong tendency to add, "and pray attend to yours."

"Not even one of our own men," growled young Egerton, "a railway employé."

But he was growing ashamed of his attitude, all the same, in face of those white wrappings.

"Here," called out Hubert, looking about him for

the first time; "any one got a pocket-knife with a spring catch?"

"Hallo, Salveson!" said Egerton Pritchard, recognising him, "what are you doing here?"

"Never mind that just now," said Hubert; "have you got a knife?"

Presently, he scarcely knew how, Egerton Pritchard was kneeling and acting as Hubert's assistant. They finished just as the carrying couch came up at a trot.

"This will never do!" cried Hubert; "straps far too tight. Got a rug or anything to put under his head? Yes, fetch it! Thanks, that will do!"

Then he added: "And all this shall be changed before I am a week older. Stand back there, men!"

"Now, Salveson," said young Pritchard, "what are you doing here?"

"I'm yard doctor," said Hubert, smiling quietly; "I begin to-morrow morning, and you shall help me to get some decent shop to keep things in. Come along about six, will you?"

"Oh, what! Me!" said Egerton Pritchard, laughing. "Why, I'm never down till about noon—if then!"

"You will be to-morrow morning," said Hubert. "I want some one with brains, and who can order about the slow coaches. These writing fellows will obstruct like—Irish M.P.s!"

"All right," said Egerton, "I'll try if I can wake in time. But does my father know about all this?"

"He appointed me half an hour ago."

"Holy Mercèdes!" said Egerton, aghast. "Did you mesmerise him? I wish you would show me how."

"So long!" said the young doctor. "I must see my patient home. I don't really enter till to-morrow morning." Then a new thought struck him. "I must get off a wire," he said, "to Tim, my brother, to send down my instruments and surgical traps. Or perhaps——"

"Perhaps what?" said young Egerton Pritchard.

"Your auto all in trim?"

"Of course!" said the owner proudly. He lived for that.

"Would you mind running up to the manor, asking for Tim, and bringing them down yourself? There's a folding table, and a lot of chemical traps. You may need two trips."

"I don't care a hang if it takes me all night," said Egerton, laughing again; "you've done for my dinner anyway. You'll have to help me with the lie to-morrow. I'm delighted to do anything for the man that got over my old governor."

He began to find it amusing.

"Here she is!" And they were at the door of the corrugated iron shed, where reposed the 60 h.-p. Mercèdes, since well known to fame.

Hubert, his heart singing within him, drunk with responsibility, yet cool as only a born surgeon can be, shouted to the men who were carrying off Ned Dillingham.

"Easy with that pole. Get a man not quite so tall. That will even things a bit. I'm going ahead to see that his wife is not taken by surprise. Tramp, men!" He turned to Egerton, who was bringing the great motor-car out of its shed as easily as a trick bicycle. "Now, then," he said, "please don't run over anybody, but drop me within five minutes at the end of Bourne Street, along the Cheviot Road."

"You shall be there in two—I don't care if they fine me for it."

And the cream-coloured Mercèdes shot down the wide, finely macadamised shore road like a blonde thunderbolt, trailing mellow dust-clouds behind it, punctuated here and there with blue policemen, like petrified marks of exclamation.

CHAPTER XV

THE OUT-AND-OUTER COMES HOME

AT 109, Bourne Street, off the Cheviot Road, Hubert knocked. The young man was trembling now—he who had been so peremptory and forceful in the yard. Happily, it was Edith who opened the door. But her mother was behind her, on the way upstairs to take off her bonnet. She had come in with her daughter Sue. They had met on the street, and a strapful of ragged books was lying on the mat. Sue, holding a knitted garter in her mouth, was calmly adjusting her foot-gear, sitting on the second lowest step.

Edith stood fair in the doorway as if to hide all this—perhaps also in the fear that Hubert Salveson had suddenly gone mad. She had heard of such things. But that young man, by a powerful effort, had become again the professional man performing a painful but necessary duty.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Dillingham," he said, lifting his hat, "but I am the resident surgeon at Pritchard's yard and works. I am sorry to say that your father has had a slight accident——"

But from the dusk of the passage, overturning the hat-stand, and throwing Edith aside, surged a new woman, whom none of them had ever seen—Emma Dillingham calling for her husband!

"He is dead—dead—my Edward—my Edward!" she cried; "oh, Mr. Hubert, this is a judgment on me. I should have told him—I know I should! I never kept aught from him before!"

None had ever heard the out-and-outer called Edward before.

"No, no," said the young man, "I was on the spot. I gave him the first attentions. He is only stunned. He will be here in a few minutes. I must beg of you to be calm. You must be yourself. Mr. Dillingham was unconscious when I left him, but he may have come to himself with the air and the movement. Get a bed ready quickly, please—no, not a feather bed—yes, Miss Edith, a good mattress!"

Mrs. Dillingham sank moaning into her chair. She was a large, soft, affectionate woman. Her tears flowed easily, which was the better for her.

"Oh, I know he is dead—it is a judgment on me!" she sobbed.

"Mrs. Dillingham, I assure you, on my word, that with care there is nothing to fear except a somewhat long detention indoors. May I see the room? Thank you!"

Edith was at the height of the occasion in a moment. For a long moment she had stood regarding Hubert fixedly. But all at once, comprehending that this idler had suddenly found his manhood and would have to be obeyed, she set herself to help him as best she could.

She "bustled" Sue, as that young person indignantly expressed it, in short emphatic sentences.

"Take away that bag—clear up these crumbs. Come and help air those sheets. Don't stand gaping there like Miss Keck! Give mother the smelling salts and leave her alone. When they bring in father, stay with her, and do what you can! Keep telling her that it is all right. Then I am going to lock the kitchen door, till we get him settled."

"Oooooh-booooo!" said Sue, suddenly snatching at her apron, "father's dead! I know he is!"

"Nothing of the sort," snapped Edith; "did you not hear what the doctor said——?"

"The who? *He's* not a doctor! It's only young Salveson from the manor! Ooooh-hooo, father's dead! What shall I do?"

"You'll do as I tell you, miss!" commanded her sister; "there, stop crying! Go and keep mother quiet if you can. Here they come! Now!"

And even as she spoke, the foremost of them that carried Ned Dillingham were clicking the latch of the little green gate before the door.

Edith swiftly turned the key of the kitchen door, and, amid the loud wailing of Mrs. Dillingham, alternately throwing herself against the panels, anon sinking back into her big padded chair to sob the easier, the out-and-outer was carried up to the first floor back. It had been Edith's own room, and she had had just time to sweep all the ornaments and little knick-knacks off the drawers and dressing-table into a big dust-sheet, so that when Hubert entered, it was as bare and clean as an hospital private ward.

Hubert, in short, sharp words, the like of which Edith had never heard from him, expressed his admiration—as any surgeon might. Strictly so.

Then Edith went downstairs to show the men out. Hubert was busy above. All Bourne Street was at its several doors, looking towards Number 109. Bourne Street was well accustomed to these solemn processions—the little tent of white canvas over the upturned face—the swathed figure, so terrible! At whose door would it stop? Or the next similar convoy of carriers, all marching in step? Then the men, with their own names in the lottery box of chance, wondering if their turn would come next! Small wonder their faces were sober and unjovial as, in silence, they relieved each other at the poles.

"From the yard!—From the yard! Who is it? Ned Dillingham, the out-and-outer?"

So ran the rumour, swift as the lightning, from group to group.

And no preachers—Church, Methodist, or Presbyterian—nor yet Salvation Army captain at any street corner could have preached a better sermon than did the atheist that day, as they bore him with his toes turned towards the flushed skies of heaven, and his head hidden under the little merciful V of the tent.

"Have you any neighbour who can help you to-night?" asked Hubert, as they arranged the sufferer on his couch, and the young man began to undo the bandages for a more complete examination and treatment.

"Oh, no," said Edith hastily. She had a reputation for "keeping herself to herself," and wanted none of the gossip of Bourne Street. "I can do all that is necessary, I feel sure. I and my sister, that is. She will do what I tell her. I will keep her from school."

"Get me some old linen," he said; "is that your mother I hear? Perhaps it will be better to let her come now, and assure herself that he is breathing. That will get the worst over for her, and afterwards—well, we must either keep her out, or find her something to do! But quiet we must have."

As Edith went down the stairs, through the little fanlight above the doorway she saw something swift glance past. It must have stopped suddenly—somewhat further on. For it was there again before she had reached the bottom step. From one end of Bourne Street to the other there came the sound of running, shouting children.

The knocker sounded faintly, wielded by a nervous hand. There were no bells in the Moon-Washington eight-and-sixpence-a-week houses. Two young men stood without. One was guarding the most magnificent automobile in the northern shires. He looked up from his glasses, and said, "By Jove!" quite audibly.

The other stood on the doorstep, a more than

plump young man, clean-shaven, with a look as if he had put on a hat that was not his own—indeed, several sizes too small.

"My brother Hubert—Dr. Hubert Salveson—is he here?" he asked all in a gasp, as if out of breath.

Edith nodded, and then spoke.

"They brought home my father, who has had a bad accident at the yard—he is with him now!" Behind her Edith shut the little glass door, which Ned Dillingham had put up himself—for style, the neighbours said. She could hear the wailing in the kitchen, and Sue's shrill "Don't, mother, don't; then, oh, don't!"

"Can I do anything?" said the young man, still hesitating on the doorstep, one foot playing a kind of tattoo.

"I think not," said Edith; "I must go to my mother. It has been a shock to her—she—she is not quite herself yet!"

"Please tell my brother first that we have all his traps here—in Mr. Pritchard's touf-touf. If he wants anything he can come down and get it. We are taking everything he doesn't want direct to the works!"

"I will tell him."

And she flew upstairs again. Hubert was doing something with a small syringe of silver and glass.

"I do not want him to come to himself yet," he explained; "there is something to be done to his shoulder which will hurt him."

"Your brother is below with all your medical things in Mr. Pritchard's automobile!" she said. "If you want anything, I was to say that you were to go down for it."

"Keep that bandage there firmly, then," he answered, "and do not let him turn his head!"

In a minute Hubert was back, his hands full of bandages, splints, and a little locked case which he carried carefully.

"Good-night, Salveson—I mean doctor," cried the young owner of the creamy Mercèdes; "I'll try and be on hand to-morrow morning. That's not off, I presume?"

"No, certainly not; it will be all right here before then. He will have an uneasy night, of course, but I shall be at the yard all right by six."

"So long!"

"Good-bye, Tim—thank you, old man!"

"That's all right!"

And before one could crack finger-and-thumb the cream-coloured racer had turned to the left into Cheviot Road, and half Bourne Street was running to look at what, by the time they got to the corner, was no more than a whiff of spent petrol, a double puff of amber dust, and a black speck fast receding into nothing against the tawny rose of the western sky.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TABLES BEGIN TO TURN

THE morning hours make for confidences—that is, if people can keep awake. I know a man who never becomes the half-angel, half-impish changeling which his initials suggest to all the world, till he has passed the "wee short hour ayont the twal." Then he walks the floor like a tiger, and coruscates. It is good then to be silent.

There was a tiny fire in the old-fashioned register grate in the big back bedroom at 109, Bourne Street. On the bed Ned Dillingham lay, still unconscious, and moaned. The shoulder had been put as far into place as possible. Time, good nursing, and better bandaging, with (afterwards) skilled massage, must do the rest.

Mrs. Dillingham, besotted with emotion, was in bed, asleep. Sue drowsed in an armchair, her feet gathered up under her, and a shawl over her head. Hubert and Edith sat on small chairs, facing each other by the bedside. The out-and-outer turned and turned, moaning.

"He is not suffering," Hubert reassured her; "it will be worse when he wakes. I will leave you some drops for him to take."

She looked up quickly:

"You are not going?" she said, her look travelling from the sufferer to the sleeping Sue.

It meant—"to leave me alone!"

He understood, and added quickly: "I do not anticipate any immediate change. I shall look in to-morrow morning, as soon as I can get away.

I have some men to see at the yard at six. Your brother will help you—no, I forgot—he has to be at his work by seven, hasn't he? But if you like, I will get a nurse."

"No—no—no!" cried Edith. "I can do all that is necessary for my father. He will listen to me when he won't to any one else."

"Very well," said Hubert, "I think you will do all right. Your sister is a strong girl for her age?"

Then, without waiting for an answer, he talked about diet.

Edith interrupted as he was treating of the making of strong soups.

"But you will be wanting to go home. You have had no sleep. And if you have to be at the yard at six—that does not give you much time. I think I can get along all right now."

Hubert glanced at his watch.

"I will wait half an hour yet," he said; "it is very probable he may need a sedative. His temperature is rising slightly." And he touched the broad, deeply trenched brow, upon which the sweat was beginning to pearl.

"Then you will go home?" pursued Edith.

"I have no home just at present," he said, not looking at her, but arranging a perfectly admirable ligature.

"What do you mean?" Edith almost gasped. She turned to Sue. She had not wakened.

Hubert faced her, suddenly erect.

"I mean," he began, speaking quietly, and with the manner he had kept up ever since he had felt that curious tremulous sinking of the heart just as he knocked at the door—"I mean that my father has turned me out because I was determined to go to work. I went and made a proposition to Mr. Pritchard at the yard. He appointed me doctor at the yard. To-morrow I will look for lodgings. They must be modest. I asked only two pounds a week."

"Oh!" said Edith, with a sharp intake of breath. She sat up and stared at him, not daring to ask the question that was on the tip of her tongue.

Then, mastering herself, she said more calmly: "My father gets more than that—just as foreman on the railway quays. I thought a doctor——"

"I was a beggar—I was not a chooser!" said Hubert, smiling.

"And what do you mean to do to-night?" asked Edith, a little anxiously.

"This morning, you mean?" he smiled brightly. "Oh, I shall go down to the yard, and perhaps the night watchman will find me a place to lie down on. It won't be long till six o'clock."

"More than four hours—and frosty!" said Edith, looking out of the window at the winking gaslamps. "You will do nothing of the sort. If you don't mind a shakedown in Will's room, I can easily wake you in time for the yard. I have always done that for my father."

"If it is really not too much trouble," began Hubert. But already the girl was gone. Sue moved sleepily on her chair, blinked at the unaccustomed man sitting with his finger on her father's pulse. Then she began to cry. "Ooo-ooo! He is dead! I know he is dead!"

"Hush!" said Hubert imperiously; "he is only asleep. You must not waken him. See, I will make you comfortable." And he pushed a second chair under her feet, wrapped a shawl about them, and lowered the red cotton cushion to fit her head.

"That is the way we do at the hospital," he said; "I am the doctor, you know. You have got to do what I say."

The girl's sleep-heavy sobbing hushed, her breathing lengthened, and she was asleep in five minutes Hubert stood by the bedsideregarding her little black tousle of hair on the red cushion. The out-and-outer awakened. He looked about him drowsily also.

"It's all right," he said, in a slow, thick, stifled voice. "Parsons are all wrong. It was just like sleep, a blue sleep—and me running without legs!"

Hubert held to his lips the little graduated glass, and bade him drink.

"Your health, mate!" said the out-and-outer, looking at him with unseeing eyes. Then Edith entered, and Hubert laid her father's head down with professional care. He was asleep again.

"He will do now for some hours, I think," he murmured. "You should try to get a little sleep. Draw those two chairs together. See how I have settled your sister."

Edith smiled and shook her head slightly, as if putting the proposition aside. She was now the officer on deck.

"Go next door," she said. "There is an old couch in the corner. It used to be in mother's room when she was so ill; but it is nice and soft. I have often—— But be quick, Dr. Salveson—the candle is burning. Never fear, I will awaken you in lots of time."

He went. He threw himself down, and, quite contrary to his expectation, he had followed Sue's example before he knew it.

Edith moved into the vacant place beside her father's pillow. She sighed a little happy sigh as she heard the creak of the couch in Will's room.

"I couldn't bear he should go down to that horrid yard at this time of the morning," she said, speaking to Hubert's graduated medicine-glass.

Then a smile which never man had seen came over her life, like a cloud passing over a wet rose-garden, the colour flashing out with the coming of the sun.

"Did he do it for my sake?" she thought. "I wonder!"

All the same, she knew.

. . . . . .

With a crescent wonder Hubert awoke to unfamiliar surroundings. It was beginning to be light without. He lay half undressed on a couch covered with faded blue and white striped chintz. A young man was lying huddled up on a bed in the opposite corner, a patchwork quilt up to his ears. There was a light tapping at the door—light, and yet a signal which would not be denied. The young man with the bristly head and prominent ears stirred, grumbled, and broke out in denunciation.

"It's not time yet, Ede! Can't you let a fellow sleep?"

He had it now. He knew where he was.

"Thank you," Hubert said quickly, "I shall be downstairs in a minute."

He was in Edith Dillingham's house, attending on her father, who had had an accident. Dear Edith—oh, the dar—— No, that was not the key. He had to begin in a more professional tone.

By this time he had combed his hair, washed with haste and dried with dispatch, snapped on collar and tie, and was ready. Edith stood on the little landing. Light was filtering in from the front room, and he could hear the regularly checked sound of a bronchial sleeper—her mother, without a doubt.

"Good morning, Miss Edith," he said, "how is your patient now? Ah, that is good. I will take just one look at him before I go down to the works!"

That was the style he had decided upon. There was pride in saying it, too. James Pritchard could not have mentioned "the works" more proudly, even in the early days of the first "Crow's Nest."

The out-and-outer promised to fulfil his name as a patient. He had slept lightly but sufficiently, had taken his draught, had asked quite calmly for something to drink, had taken it, and dropped off to sleep. Hubert gave some directions, with a vague continuous imitation of his old professor's manner, to the chief "sister" of the ward.

Then he passed downstairs—to be surprised out of all reason. In the kitchen a bright little fire was blazing between the bars of the range. The brasses, turncocks, even the handles winked. A kettle was singing in a friendly fashion. There was also a little table daintily laid out—for one. Under a twisted white napkin were two eggs. Bread and butter was ready cut on a plate, according to the fashion of the country. At his elbow a cottage loaf on a huge wooden platter obscured half the china on the "dresser."

The teapot crouched under a worked cosy. It was all like magic. Edith Dillingham stood in the doorway, her white working apron and high-gathered hair emphasising her slight, graceful figure.

"How did you manage it?" he asked, surprised out of his dictatorial manner. "Oh, Edith!"

He took a step towards her, but in a moment she had whipped her hands behind her, and was retreating into the dusk of the lobby.

From half-way up the stairs he heard her say: "I think you will find everything you want, doctor!"

The next moment her light foot was pattering on the wax-cloth which connected the oasis of the stair-head mat with the carpeting in the large first-floor chamber where lay her father.

A clock with the inscription "John Helme, Hexam, 1790," in a semi-circle above the dial, ticked heavily, as if fully aware of its eight-day dignity, at his left hand. Hubert was surprised that he could eat with such appetite. He did not remember that he had gone practically without food all the preceding day. He finished two eggs and laid the cottage loaf under heavy contribution.

"*Ting!*" John Helme, late of Hexam's eight-day masterpiece, had informed the latest recruit of Pritchard's yard that it was time to be going.

Hubert received the same information in other ways. The walls of Moon-Washington houses are not thick, nor their policies extensive. He could hear—not indeed the clang of the wooden shoon (for the yardsmen and builders do not go to work in clogs, like mere operatives), but a steadily increasing tramp of heavily tacketed boots on concreted pavements.

"Hey, Johnnie! Hey, owd cove! 'When Johnnie went marching home,' Owd Pritch 'ad guv 'im the sack!"

"Come, make haste, lad! Thee's allus tyin' thy shoe!"

Which last sally, for some esoteric reason, never failed to raise a laugh.

Hubert wished Edith would come down, but nevertheless, his heart was proud within him. For the first time in his life he was "going to work." Two pounds a week and find himself! It was not much. But he was a working-man. He kept himself. He could even afford to have a little home like this—a little fire, glinting bright and early, and——

"Come along, or you'll be locked out!"

The words were not applied to him, but they applied nevertheless. No time for day-dreaming now. He was one of the others. He opened the door and went out. The sun, into whose last beams he had seen the cream-coloured car roll so swiftly the night before, was now greeting him over the chimney-crowded ridges of East Dene, through a russet fulminance of smoke, fallen earthward with the crisp stillness of the morning.

He buttoned the overcoat which Tim had brought him, for the chill was not yet out of the air, and strode down Bourne Street, legging it yardward with the best. He turned once to look at the lace-curtained windows of 109.

"I did it for her!" he said; "*but I like it for itself.*"

There spoke the man.

And behind the unswerving straightness of the lace folds, two lips that belonged to the prettiest girl in Thorsby murmured, even as they smiled: "He did it for me!"

And that was the woman, who, in love, makes nor plus nor minus.

CHAPTER XVII

LATE TO BED AND EARLY TO RISE

PRITCHARD'S yard never quite slept. There were processes which had to be watched night and day, castings to be tended like newborn infants, temperatures to be watched, and much else. All these at ordinary times. But when there came a real pressure, then on their poles the huge electric lights flashed, blazed, drooped, hissed, and buzzed all night long to the fall of the hammers and the thunder of machinery.

Now it was a quiet, average time. James Pritchard, to use his own words, "could do with such periods." He knew that, under continuous pressure, work soon began to be slackly done. Nevertheless, he was in his office on the morning of Hubert's début at an earlier hour than usual. Something in the young man's manner had stirred him. He could not tell what or why. But instead of doing work in his own study at home, he had bidden his man get him early breakfast, and fetch the plans and tracings to the yard.

James Pritchard had kept to his old habits of early rising. And though nowadays he did not usually visit the works before nine o'clock, yet there were occasions when, for disciplinary purposes—"to keep the lads up to the mark"—he would make an early flying visit, which no one could be sure of. He did not come by automobile or carriage and pair like his sons. Instead he took the local train—third-class ordinary—to Kelmscott Station, at the corner of the yard, and let himself in by a side

door, so as to be in the midst of things without warning.

Hubert was in the great office of Pritchard's at six o'clock sharp. The heads of working departments were clustering for the morning gossip about newly lit fires. Hubert went up to a commissionaire-looking individual in a uniform.

"Is my room ready?" he asked quietly.

The Jack-in-Office (literally) looked scornfully at the tall young man in the overcoat.

"I didn't know that you had a room," he said; "if you want accommodation, the asylum is higher up the hill."

This stupidity was greeted with laughter. For, as it happened, none of these men had been out in the yard at the time of the accident, and though a few may have seen Hubert pass a scrap of paper to the cashier, they had thought no more about the matter. Nor was it the hour for that exact and cautious Scot to make his appearance behind his pay-desk.

The laugh at the very spectral wit of the office-keeper had hardly died away, and he was still looking about for applause, when suddenly he received a severe application of the toe of a boot between the tails of his bottle-green coat—as he himself afterwards expressed it, "a bit of a lifter behind."

"See here, my man," said young Egerton Pritchard, "I've a great mind to boot you out of the yard, and I may do it yet. If ever I hear you utter an insolent word to any gentleman in this office, I'll break your head myself, and then my father can have the rest of you to put in his stove. Get along, and make a fire in my room. This is Doctor Hubert Salveson. My father has appointed him resident surgeon at the works, and what he says goes. And any one who considers his privileges infringed, let him come to me for information."

The fire was already burning in Mr. Egerton's room. There was a large double window looking out on the river, a north light, but all very brilliant within, owing to the reflection from off the dancing waters of the tidal river.

"You can have this!" said the young man. "There is a clerk's room to the right I can do a bit of fitting-up to—I don't work my clerk to death, anyway. I'd better take away these things, though. They do look a little out of place in a temple of—what was the old chap's name?—oh, Æsculapius."

He referred to many prints of hunting scenes, pictures of motor races, and a whole pack of cabinet photographs of pretty ladies, arranged in fan-patterns about the mantelpiece. Many of these were tacked to the walls with the broad-headed pins out of drawing boards vanished from the draughtsman's office.

"But I am depriving you," said Hubert wistfully. For his eyes were fixed upon the wide trough in the little ante-room, fitted with running water, where once on a time Egerton had thought of developing his own Kodak negatives.

"Not a bit," said the youth heartily; "do you suppose I would be here at this hour in the morning if I meant to stick at a trifle like that? Besides, I've my other dressing-room, you know—the one you raided last night to such a tune. I shall have to have a Chub lock on that door, I see, or I shall never know when I have a shirt to my back."

Hubert laid out the stores and instruments transported by the Mercèdes. He established the cases on the top of the low ranges of bookcases which Mr. Egerton had never troubled to fill.

Then he turned to his companion.

"There were two men—or, rather, a man and a boy—whom I told to be in waiting down in the office at a quarter past six and at the half-hour."

"I say, you have not been long. What's up? No operating, I hope, before breakfast."

"No," said Hubert smilingly (he had had his breakfast), "but I mean to scare their immortal souls out of them. They are 'white-lead mixers', whom I caught without the proper gloves."

Egerton twirled his pointed moustache, and touched a bell.

"Here, you, Lush; send up these 'white-lead mixers,' one at a time!" He spoke to the now humbled bottle-green person as if he did not see him.

"Please, sir," said Lush (for Lushy, so-named from his habits), "Mobsy Higgs is below, and he's swearing fire-an'-all!"

"Up with him," said Egerton, "and I'll tame him—or rather the doctor here will!"

Now Hubert was more properly a surgeon, and ought accordingly to have been addressed as "Mr." But that word has no honour with the people. To them a doctor is a doctor, and all others imitations—except, perhaps, an occasional miraculous "bone-setter," who has learned his "knack" by rule of thumb and the bones of sheep.

While Mobsy Higgs of the violent vocabulary was coming up, guided by Lush, Egerton was looking about.

"I say, look here," he cried eagerly, opening a door which led out of the little ante-room with the trough and running water, "this gives on an empty passage; and there's a side-door to the yard all to yourself. We will have a brass plate on it as big as a house—one that they will see wink right across in East Dene. And then you can have all your patients come in as it suits you, and go straight out again without going through the main office. That will be ripping! I'll see about it to-day, after lunch."

Mobsy lurched in—a truculent, dirty fellow, beetle-

browed, heavy-jawed, dangerous-looking. He was prepared to be insolent, in private, to the doctor.

"Only an owner's dodge to keep us from 'kipping' a bit!" he had explained to his mates, for he considered himself something of an orator. "Don't ye see, lads! We can't play off so easy with a doctor on the premises. We'll strike agin it—that we will!"

But the sight of "young maister" daunted Mobsy. The yard was considerably "fond o' young maister." "He were siccan a wild 'un, he were! They were proud on 'im! Yea, moor nor a bit. And thae dowgs as he kep'! That bull, now—ah! 'Im wot gripped Deasy of the 'Shamrock's' fightin' mastiff, three times his size, and never let go till the funeral!"

"Show your fingers, Mobsy," said Hubert, standing up to him like the "young maister's" bull himself.

And Mobsy Higgs forgot his prepared oration, and showed up to him, as per order.

It was then that James Pritchard came in.

. . . . .

He stood silently regarding the scene without a movement, save of his restless bushy eyebrows. The grey-white gorsy stuff about his mouth and chin quivered slightly, and he stood, as it were, worshipping upon the top of his umbrella.

"Eh, what's that?" he said at last, in a tone of expostulation.

"I cannot take any more cases at present—stay below, please!" said Hubert. Egerton, of course, had seen his father, and tried to nudge Hubert in time.

"You are disturbing my assist——Mr. Egerton, I mean," said Hubert, still without looking up—"steady, if you please. And as for you, go downstairs, and wait your turn!"

James Pritchard grinned, shook his head at his son, and went.

Hubert finished the dressing of Mobsy Higgs, who was in a state of collapse—first, at the fear of death, which Hubert was putting on him, but, secondly, consoled to some extent by the thought of what he would have to tell the mates in the red paint and white lead sheds. The maister—"Owd Jimmy"—ordered out of his own office by a whipper-snapper, and going!

"Next!" said Hubert; "the young apprentice—not the man who came up afterwards!"

He cleansed the nails of the apprentice, applied a temporary dressing, lectured the lad, and told him to come again in three days at the same hour—"and if ever I catch you or any of your gang without gloves—— Now, where's that other man?" he cried, showing out the white-lead apprentice, threatening him all the time.

And James Pritchard appeared in the doorway.

Hubert stood staring at him. But he had learned at the hospitals that the acting-surgeon is, and must be, sole master on his own ground. So he looked the despot of Pritchard's squarely in the eye, and said simply, "Good morning, sir!"

"Good morning," said James Pritchard, grimly humorous; "at work, I see. That's right! And standing no nonsense! Right again! Don't stand it! Never here!"

Then he turned to his son Egerton.

"You," he said brusquely, "what are you doing out of bed at this hour of the morning—and in the yard? Speak out. Did you come straight here from that dinner of Hornifields'?"

"No, father," said the youth. "I came down from home to give Dr. Salveson a hand."

"Eh, wha-a-a-t?" exclaimed his father; "say that again!"

The young fellow, flushing a little, repeated his statement.

"Then you weren't at that dinner at all?"

"No, father."

"And you accepted?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And what are you going to do about it?" demanded his father.

"Well, you see, sir," said Egerton, "Tim Salveson and I had to go at it hard last night with the 'teuf-teuf' to get all doc.'s traps down from the manor, and look after that lorryman who was smashed up——"

"One of our men?" queried the head of Pritchard's, frowning.

"Railway-man," said his son, briefly; "but it was one of our fellows who set off his 'gees,' throwing hot cinders among their legs——"

Old James Pritchard made a mental note. That careless man and his stove-poker would be acquainted before many hours were over.

"Well—what else?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing," said Egerton. "Salveson—the doctor, I mean—is going to give me a hand with the excuse to the Hornifields presently, when he gets through. And we look to you, sir, not to say anything to mother!"

"Dinner engagements sacred—that sort of thing? Accessory after the fact!" said his father grimly. "Well, what else?"

"Oh, only came down here this morning to see that Salveson got a proper room. Of course, nothing had been done. It was nobody's business. So he is to have mine, and I can go in with the clerk. I have my dressing-room down by the auto-shed, anyway; so really, if you don't mind——!"

The sharp, bristly little man looked at son first, and at Hubert after.

"He's done a lot more for you than ever he'd have done for his old father," he growled. "Had any breakfast, young 'un?"

"No, sir," said his "young 'un."

"And you, doctor?"

"Oh, yes; at half-past five, before I came to the yard!"

And, very strangely, the blood flew crimson to his face. James Pritchard eyed him curiously, but said nothing. He would have it all in time.

"Very well," he said; "what are you going to do now?"

"I shall be very busy," said Hubert. "I have to arrange my stores and instruments. Then to speak to the foremen of the foundries and forges in their breakfast hour. I want a little depôt of Carron oil, cotton wool, lint, bandages, and other simple things in each department. The foremen shall keep it, and I will give them all a little talk about how to use what they have. Then I must run up and see the man who was thrown out last night——"

"Think he will get round?" James Pritchard inquired.

"I think so, sir," said the young surgeon; "but it was a near thing!"

"Jolly near!" said his son.

"Then you have no further use for this young jackanapes?" demanded James Pritchard, looking at Egerton.

"No, sir—not for the moment. He is an excellent assistant; nerve very good; but, if you would name a time, I should much like to bring a note of my requirements for your approval."

"Oh, any time, any time. I'm always up aloft there," said James Pritchard. "But you've had no breakfast, young 'un. Come along, and have some of your father's."

It was the first time in his life he had ever asked either Egerton or his brother to the Crow's Nest to share a meal. James Pritchard was very much pleased indeed with his son.

CHAPTER XVIII

AS BETWEEN MAN AND MAN

NEVER had the world appeared so bright and wholesome a place to Hubert Salveson as that morning of May when, at nine o'clock, he lifted his "topper" from the box in which it reposed, gave it a brush with his arm, and went out into the obliterating silence of the streets. They were busy enough streets, too—workaday streets, with Tom Hime's shop, Tom Hime's foreman with the white teeth, and Tom Hime's apprentice, all fulfilling various functions. Carts passed laden to the market, or rattled away empty from it. Noisy enough in all conscience. But coming out of the clash and thunder of the yard, the sharp din of hammers, the graver boom of mallets, the shriek of inter-crossing and short-tempered "bunt-about" engines, it seemed to Hubert Salveson as if he had been suddenly stricken deaf.

Before going out he had, truth to tell, hesitated a little. Then, obeying a sudden professional impulse of correction, he had put on his frock-coat, and taken the tall hat out of the big hat-box, made, Tim, had declared, for the purpose of carrying off the slain. He made the sacrifice with a pang. But he was no fool, this new, self-reliant surgeon, born in a night out of the *fainéant* who so lately had been Hubert Salveson of the Manor, waiter on dead men's shoes.

He knew that so long as he wore a straw hat and a tweed jacket, the men and, what is much more, their wives would never receive him as verily "the

doctor." Concerning this Thorsby has no hesitations. No high hat—no right doctor!

He was confirmed in this shrewd guess, by the appearance of Mrs. Dillingham at the door of the cottage, No. 109, Bourne Street, at which, twenty minutes afterwards, he tapped with professional gentleness.

"Dr. Budden, who has been our family physician, has called," she said in a hoarse, shame-faced way.

"I shall be very glad to consult with Dr. Budden," said Hubert, entering briskly, before the lady in the doorway could make up her mind.

He did not mean to be shut out of *that* house.

"Dr. Budden is in the parlour," whispered Mrs. Dillingham. "He is displeased. Ned refuses to see him. He is always so violent, Ned!"

At that moment a great voice, trained to command and adjure a team of horses amid the shocks of Great Eastern shunting lines and the roar of Pritchard's yard, made the house shake.

"Is that pill-fellow gone? If he comes up here, I'll brain him with my good arm!"

Mrs. Dillingham silently wrung her hands, and with red, tearful eyes, she appealed to Hubert, still under her breath.

"Our family physician for years," she said, "and such a comfort in sickness. But Ned never could abide him. I'm sure I can't think why!"

From the first floor back Ned informed her.

"Budden's a blessed, chattering old wife, and I won't have him touch my bandages. I'll wait for the young 'un! I heard the door just now," he added; "was that him gone? You can come up and read to me, Em—anything—the Bible, if you like, as a thankoffering—so be old Budden's gone! Good riddance!"

And this was the very gentleman with whom, without any warning, save a piteous uplift of

Emma Dillingham's hands, and the opening of the parlour door, Hubert found himself face to face.

"How are you, Dr. Budden?" he said, holding out his hand heartily. But Dr. Budden kept one of his behind him, holding a very broad, flat-brimmed tall hat, and in the other his never worn black gloves.

He contented himself with bowing stiffly.

"I believe I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance," he said rigidly. He was a man in appearance like a butler of a good house, who has lived well—replete, heavy, his brain sodden with an overloaded digestion. He had red "frogs" in the corners of his eyes like a St. Bernard, and long side-whiskers of a sandy grey. Otherwise he had been clean-shaven the day before yesterday, washed (probably) yesterday, and in need of both to-day.

Before this person Hubert stood up tall and immaculate, his hand slowly falling back to his side.

"There is—ah—such a thing as professional etiquette," announced Dr. Budden. "It is usual for a new-comer to call upon his seniors, and—hem—give them an opportunity of appreciating—yes, of appreciating his credentials. Hem!"

Hubert smiled pleasantly. "As to who I am," he said, "you can inquire of my father, Surgeon-General Salveson, at the manor. But I did not consider that it was necessary to call upon you, Dr. Budden, as we had met before, when I was house-surgeon at the hospital over at East Dene—case of false infantile tuberculosis in the finger-joints. You treated it with poultices, you remember, and the later stages of the case fully bore out your excellent diagnosis."

Dr. Budden expanded his chest and shifted his hat and gloves into his left hand.

"My dear sir——" he began portentously. But Hubert had not quite finished.

"Besides," he said, "I am here as the resident surgeon at Mr. Pritchard's works. I represent the firm. I do not, in the meantime, intend to take any private practice! Indeed, my contract forbids me to do so!"

At this welcome announcement Dr. Budden shook him warmly by the hand.

"Say no more," he said. "I am glad indeed to know that a son of our old and honoured friend, Surgeon-General Salveson, of Thorsby Manor, has entered our noble profession."

"IS—THAT—FOOL GONE?"

The thunder of Ned Dillingham's voice from the first floor back was partly drowned by a severe fit of coughing on the part of Mrs. Dillingham on guard outside. She had also let fall a tea-tray over the banisters.

"I am delighted to have made your acquaintance," said Dr. Budden, ignoring the voice from above—if, indeed, he heard it—"and if on any occasion I can give you the benefit of my experience, sir, you know where to find me. Hospitals, sir, are very well—a rough-and-ready way of making medical men. But for real knowledge, you will find that there is nothing so valuable as an extensive and long-continued private practice. Good-day, sir—good-day! Ah, Miss Edith, blooming as the rose as usual! No need to tell me that you have no need of my treatment."

He turned as if to say something to the young man, but thought better of it. Instead, he addressed Edith. "I leave your father in good hands—the son of——"

Edith, returned from shopping, took in the situation swiftly, and conveyed the respectable but not brilliant practitioner to the green gate, talking brightly all the time, in order to drown the quite libellous declarations of the out-and-outer as to

Dr. Budden's intellect, knowledge, and general relationship to certain of the most unpopular members of the animal kingdom.

Then, entering, Edith closed the door and shook hands with the tall, frock-coated, professional-looking young man who stood with his hat in his hand. It could not be for him that she had got breakfast that very morning, as for an ordinary workman going to the yard. It flashed across her mind (such things will) that on two pounds a week it could not be done—rent, clothing, firing, taxes, water, and—oh (here she blushed vehemently) how her thoughts ran away with her! How silly she was! And yet—the busy housewife's brain ran on in spite of herself—why did they teach her mental arithmetic at school? Yes, she thought it could be done. She had seen the price of gentlemen's frockcoats in the advertisements in the *Illustrated News*, also in the shop windows. They are always the blackest ones as you go along the streets, and often have an oblong panel looking down the street, as you come, so that you can see yourself without stopping. They are thoughtful men, gentlemen's tailors—a fact she used often to notice over at East Dene when she was at school there.

Then she heard her father's voice.

"Your mother's a fool," cried the out-and-outer, speaking as he ought not of the wife of his bosom, who, however, instead of resenting the words, was glad to have him partially appeased. Her crime was that she had let in that other old wife of a pudding-faced, double-ended sausage of a Budden!

"I say," he cried out suddenly, "has the young 'un come? What! He has? Why not bring him up, then? Sharp, there!"

And with a look at each other, which said many things, Hubert and Edith separated.

"I took the liberty of showing myself up," he said, smiling; "how goes it this morning? I was

obliged to speak a moment with Dr. Budden, whom I found in the parlour——"

"Yes, yes, I know," said the invalid, irritably. "Emma's a fool. Thinks that because Budden keeps a pill-shop, and sails round like an old he-hen monthly nurse, he can splint and bandage *me*, Ned Dillingham, like a proper hospital surgeon!"

Ned submitted himself to the proper hospital expert aforesaid, and presently Edith had to be called upon as an assistant. She was complimented on her quickness and precision. Even the patient refrained from abusing her.

"And now," said Ned Dillingham, when he had been re-settled, "what are you going to do with yourself? They tell me that your father has turned you out, and that you have got a job down at the yard—that right?"

"That's right!" said Hubert.

"Well, then," continued the out-and-outer, "how are you going to fix yourself?"

"I have got Mr. Egerton's room at the back of the office rigged for a surgery," said Hubert evasively.

"I don't mean that, and you know it," said the out-and-outer. "Ede, tell your mother I shall want her in five minutes."

Then, with the girl's departure, he returned to Hubert.

"I mean, where are you going to lodge? You will have to make up your mind. You can't live at the 'Grand' for that, you know!"

"I thought—I was advised to try to get lodgings at your neighbour's, Mr. Challoner's," said Hubert, with some hesitation; "he has a large cottage and lots of rooms!"

"Never—never," cried the out-and-outer; "you shall not set a foot in Jo Challoner's house and eat Jo Challoner's meals. A pretty ingrate I should be to let you. No, this house is as big and bigger, and there is a little sitting-room and a big bedroom

downstairs which are a brace of white elephants to us. Em and I have often spoken of taking a lodger, but never quite found one to our mind. You can have 'em, if you like. Em won't overcharge you, I'll warrant."

Hubert Salveson swallowed something, which seemed to him to contain the chance of all the joy of earth done up in a "cachet"—a large "cachet," difficult to swallow.

"Mr. Dillingham," he said, very gravely, "I appreciate your offer, but I cannot accept it without telling you plainly, as man to man, that I—love your daughter. I left home to work for a living, so that I might not be dependent on my father, and, in time, be able to marry the girl I love—mean to marry."

There were feet on the stairs.

"Stop where you are till I call you, you women!" shouted the out-and-outer, "I'm talkin'!"

They turned and retired, Mrs. Dillingham explaining to her daughter the exigencies of domestic life, and extolling the virtues of marital obedience.

"Well, *I* wouldn't," said Edith, determinedly recalcitrant, "I'd—oh, I do wonder what they are saying!"

Then she sighed a somewhat comforted sigh.

"But I'll make him tell me when he comes down!"

Edith Dillingham did not refer to her father.

Above stairs the out-and-outer looked at the young doctor, and Hubert Salveson looked at the out-and-outer. For a long moment neither spoke.

"I had better not accept your offer," said Hubert, with a tremble in his voice. The out-and-outer took some time, and when he spoke it was almost as soberly as Hubert himself had done.

"Between you and me it does not matter," he said slowly. "'They say—what say they? Let them say!' as my Em's old Scotch father used to say.

But women are kittle cattle, and Edith—well, perhaps it were better not——. But I'm sorry. Yes, doctor—sorry. You're going? Then good-day to you, if you must go. You have spoken as a man to a man. I believe you. I count on you. And I ask no better than that my Ede should also!"

Hubert went down the narrow cottage stairs, aware that he had done the right—the inevitable right, the only right—but yet with a weight on his heart. He would have been so sure of her then. No one could have come between them.

"Well, and what do you think of my husband to-day?" asked Mrs. Dillingham, as they stood on the oilcloth near the door, Edith a little behind.

"Oh, much better," reported Hubert, "I have cautioned him about moving too soon. I shall come back—in a day or two. And oh, by the way, there is a little case of things, and a bag that my brother brought last night in Mr. Egerton's automobile. I will get some one from the works to come and fetch them during the afternoon. I shall send a card with the man."

Edith's face had lost its glow.

"Something my father has said to him!" she thought. And her heart grew hard to the out-and-outer.

"You are going home—back to the Manor House?" she asked, with a new velvety accent in her voice.

"Oh, no," he answered, dully enough, "I have not yet decided where and how I am to set up my household gods. I shall go down to the works and see what can be done."

"I thought you spoke of lodgings," said Edith keenly, surer than ever that it was her father.

"Well, yes," hesitated Hubert, "I did think of Mr. Joseph Challoner's—next door——"

"Oh no—no——," cried Edith involuntarily, "not there!"

"So your father also said—I am sure that you must know best. I shall wait a day or two before making up my mind."

They went to the door together, but the veil had descended between them. The morning—the breakfast hour—the vigil of the night—all seemed a million years away; whole eternities, grey and chill, surged between. They were not the same people. Neither could speak to the other as once they had done. Green Lane—there never was a Green Lane.

"Good-morning, Miss Edith," said Hubert, "you will not forget."

His voice, so firm in the yard, faltered. He hardly knew what it was that she was not to forget—all that he had told her—all that he had done—was going to do—for her sake. But she cut him short.

"I will not forget," said Edith, her head high, and wilfully misunderstanding him, "the bag shall be sent!"

CHAPTER XIX

SUE TAKES A HAND

WHEN Hubert called again, two days after, to see his patient, Edith was out. But Ned Dillingham lay in his bed with a curious smile on his face. He kept it all through the examination and dressing.

"No assistant to-day, doctor?" he said, with a smile a little forced.

"No," said Hubert, shortly, busied with his work.

"This your first trial at this sort of thing?" said the out-and-outer. "Ah, you need not blush. It does you credit. I can see for myself easily enough. It's a rough school down there, between the N.E.R. heavy goods lines and Old Jamie's slips and sidings, but it learns a man to know men. It's about all there is to know—to my thinking!"

"I do not see things in that way," said Hubert.

"No?" said Ned Dillingham, "and you a doctor? Well, each man to his style o' thinkin'. In my opinion how a man treats his neighbour is a good deal better test of religion than what he thinks about God and that sort o' thing!'

"He can have his thoughts about God and that sort of thing, and yet treat his neighbour all the better for it," said Hubert, taking the end of a bandage from between his teeth.

"Well, you have treated me pretty decent, whatever you believe in," said Ned Dillingham; "as for me, as all the world knows, I'm an out-and-outer, but I don't interfere with the beliefs of any one else!

Ede and her mother go to one shop—Will and Sue to another!"

"Ah," said Hubert, "try and keep from turning on that side till we get the muscles back in place. And, by the by, Mr. Pritchard bade me say that your wages would be paid to you every Saturday from his cashier's office, and any reasonable compensation for the carelessness of his employé as soon as the amount is arranged."

"Old Jamie said that—sent that message to me, Ned Dillingham!"

"Yes."

The out-and-outer said something here, indicating the small hopes he had of his own happiness in an after-life. Then immediately, "I beg your pardon, doctor!—but Owd Jamie! Did he mention a figure?"

"No, he only said that if you would mention some one to represent you with a view to an amicable arrangement, he would do the same."

"Well, I name you, doctor," cried the Colossus on the bed heartily. "What's the matter with that?"

"The matter with that is," Hubert answered, smiling, "that Mr. Pritchard has done the same thing."

"Well, he must a' taken a dead, knock-me-down fancy to ye from the start," said the out-and-outer; "why, I've seen Jamie throw a man down the ladder of the Crow's Nest, and that's fourteen feet high, good!"

"Well," Hubert continued, "I ventured to propose another arrangement to Mr. Pritchard. I have been a good deal about on the yard receiving-banks and sheds since your accident. I am satisfied that the whole system there is wrong. There is checking of goods, and all that. The clerks' part is all right, I presume. But what is needed is a strong man, with authority to compel the carters—both those be-

longing to the yard and those of the company, to enter by one gate and go out by another—go to this or that siding, and unload at this receiving-bank or that! Do it, and no words about it! Keep still, please, Mr. Dillingham. You are my patient, remember. Well, I showed Mr. Pritchard how he could save money and time, work with fewer and better men, have supervision—in short, I advised him to offer you the post at your present railway wages, with certain additional benefits, such as a pension after a certain number of years and service, as is the custom with yard foremen."

"And you saw that, what I've been swearing myself hoarse about for years, and you told Owd Jamie! You are a wonder! I say," he continued, "he'll either murder you one of these days, or have you running half the yard!"

Hubert smiled again, but contented himself with asking what answer he should take back to Mr. Pritchard.

"Oh, I'll come, of course," said the out-and-outer, "and be glad of the chance. Railway work is good work, but there is nothing at the end of it. Pritchard's foreman is another matter—that is, if you can get on with the man up in the Crow's Nest!"

Ned Dillingham had something on his mind. He was awkward and nervous. "I say, excuse me asking, doctor," he said, as Hubert was preparing to leave, "how are you doing yourself—about lodgings, I mean?"

"Oh," said the young man lightly, buttoning his frock coat, "I have a folding bed which shuts up in the day-time, and I get my meals sent up from the cookhouse!"

There came an explosion from the out-and-outer, who confounded in one disastrous heap the cookhouse, the public opinion of Thorsby, and all the scandal-mongering of the world. He also made excursions into the private lives of certain persons

who "'ud have to have their heads punched," and stated that he (the out-and-outer) would be condemned if he did not do what he vehemently pleased in his own house.

Hubert shook the unbandaged hand and said, gravely: "I will wait. It is much better. I would do nothing to hurt Miss Edith."

And with a nod he was gone, leaving the out-and-outer groaning impotently.

A tall, skimpish figure was waiting for him at the corner—a girl of fourteen carrying a bag of damaged books; the strap she carried twisted about her hand as a weapon of offence. She had had a bout with Ebie Fleming.

"I'm Sue Dillingham," she said breathlessly. "What are you going to do Saturday afternoon? You've forgotten me?"

"I don't know—what should I do?" said Hubert astonished, recalling the girl who had drowsed under the shawl on the night of the accident while Edith and he were waiting for consciousness to return to the battered frame of the out-and-outer.

"You used to carry me to—somewhere—when I was a baby," said Sue, somewhat fluttered at the idea of speaking to a doctor all by herself. "I don't know exactly where it was, but, perhaps you do. Do you know, if I were you, I should go there Saturday afternoon!"

"Oh!" said Hubert, with a sudden start and a great gratitude; "thank you—is there anything I can do for you?"

"Oh, if you could only—but of course you won't!"

"What?" said Hubert, kindly; "if I can, I will."

"Well, give me something to make warts grow all over Agnes Anne Jacox. She's a mean, horrid thing. I'm 'outs' with her, and she thinks such a lot of that pasty face of hers. Oh, give me something to rub on when she's asleep—she sleeps half the time in school. I could—easy!"

"You young cannibal!" cried Hubert, laughing, "next time I come I'll bring you something which will make you 'ins' with Agnes Anne. Won't that do as well?"

"No, indeed," said Sue; "she's a horrid thing!"

"What has she done to you?"

"Done?" said Sue, with her nose in the air, "she's always runnin' after—*no*, not after girls, boys, big boys! She makes love to them—*ugh*! And she believes them when the wretches tell her she's as pretty as our Ede! Just think, Agnes Anne Jacox! Our Ede!"

Miss Susan Dillingham was loyal to her sister—in her absence.

"But *I* am fond of your sister," said Hubert, burning his boats. "I would be very glad to make love to her, if I could get the chance."

"Oh, I know that—I've always known—before Ede did, of course!" said this astonishing maiden; "but that's all right. *That* should be. And say; leave off these things when you go to—to that place where you used to carry me. I heard—somebody—say she liked you best in your nice grey suit and straw hat! I do, too; you ain't so fearful grand, you see. You're sure you can remember the name of the place? It's Green—something!"

"Yes, more than you are! Thank you—oh, yes," said Hubert, lifting his hat. "I think that by trying very hard from now till Saturday I shall be able to remember!"

"First tall hat I ever had taken off to me," said Sue triumphantly; "wait till I see Agnes Anne Jacox; won't I make a face at her!"

CHAPTER XX

ON HUTCHIN'S HAYSTACK

SUCH a frame as Green Lane station in which to set an idyll! You approached it by grimy footpaths of rasping underfoot cinder, only here and there changing for a hundred yards at a time into rambling lanes and "cloughs," in which the lovers of a former Thorsby had wandered a century ago, before Lower Dene was thought of, when East Dene was only then a red-roofed village on the ridge, and when all about Pritchard's yard extended the great Thorsby salt marshes.

Now, even the trees had gone—a few only left, clinging to thin soil blackened with smoke, putting out a tentative timid leaf or two, which presently blackened and wizened before coming to anything decided. There were hills in the distance; away to the north the Cheviots, long, grey-green ridges. The water of the estuary was lost behind great masses of building. Mills where syrens hooted by day, and furnaces which flickered in the uncertain night, fenced it off. Green Lane now stood on a wide plain, across the parched surface of which the branch line from Thorsby to Blinton made a wheal like a half-healed scar. The chimneys of mills and factories smoked all about the horizon—many more now (so at least Hubert thought) than when he went that way before, carrying Baby Sue, and pattering stories of his tutor's incompetencies to make Edith Dillingham laugh.

Something within him, strong and compelling,

took him past the old Dillingham cottage by the waterside. It had fallen into saddest disrepair. Dirty children played there. Discontented, "yawpy" fowls promenaded in and out over the unwashed, bedropped doorstep. It was hard to conceive the pretty, white Waterside Cottage, as Mrs. Ned Dillingham had kept it when she was first wedded and all the world was young.

Then there was the Manor House to pass. He could see his own room, with the blind still down, like a sightless eye. Tim would be somewhere about the garden. He felt inclined to shout to him over the ten-foot wall, "Hallo, Fat Boy!" just to hear his counter retort of "Hallo, Spooner!" which certainly carried more point now than in the days of old.

But, after all, better not. Still, he liked Tim. He had not known how much before. His father —well, he was his father; and a thrill passed momently, very momently, through his heart; the appeal of blood. But temper is stronger than blood; at least, the Salveson temper was. Hubert passed on with step a little quickened.

The manor and all within it slipped behind as soon as he breasted the rise, and saw the grey, open plateau, with the paths dipping and trundling across it—to the right the whinny scarps of Farne Height, and away down on the seaboard, where the Tor estuary widens, the vast irregular purplish splash of Pritchard's yard.

He had come out at two. On Saturdays Pritchard's emptied itself at one o'clock precisely, as a reservoir empties itself through the broken wall of a dam. After that, there was peace over Pritchard's till Monday, except, that is, for the exceptional processes, the repairs, and the occasional turns of night-and-day work on a big battleship or cruiser, wanted in a hurry to back some notable diplomacy of peace—*plus* the big stick.

Hubert walked along, picking up the landmarks, like a sailor who, after long years, visits a long-forgotten port with which he was familiar in youth. Hutchin's Farm—yes, that was its name, that low-lying one to the right. He had stolen turnips there —for Edith, so that he might have something to add to the lunch dessert; fresh fruit, as it were! Yonder was the very gap in the wall leading into the brickfield, over which he had escaped from the pursuing Hutchin, hot on revenge and armed with a pitchfork.

Near the path which went past Hutchin's stood a big haystack, crumbly at one end like a carious tooth, but in the main high and freshly roped.

Hubert had walked smartly. He did not wish to arrive too early at Green Lane. Perhaps—if, indeed, Edith was there, as Sue inferred, as she obviously meant him to understand—she might turn and go back again if he allowed her to catch sight of him. He excused his duplicity by the fact that he had something very definite to say. She would give him no chance at the house. Her mother was either in or else Edith was out. She seemed to do most of the marketing now, and at the hours when she well knew that he would be coming to see her father.

But all and any opposition aroused a Salveson. So Hubert firmed his mouth and prepared to take Time by forelock or backlock, just as he could grip him.

The young man was passing the little stackyard of Hutchin's when, over the wall, he saw a curious sight. Hanging from the high haystack, long and solid as a barn in spite of the part eaten away at one end, was something between a bundle and a human figure. Looking more closely, he saw it was a girl hanging by a rope of straw twisted about her middle. Her hands and head hung down on one side; her dress and feet straggled on the

other. There seemed to be a faint movement, but no crying, and the idea that first crossed Hubert's mind as he vaulted the dry stone dyke was that of an attempt at suicide. Yet would-be self-destroyers, even the most determined, do not hang themselves *pour le bon*, as the French say, with a rope of straw round their waists.

All the same, when Hubert cut the rope and received the girl's body in his arms, she was past speech, her face purple and congested. A lesser rope of rough hemp running horizontal-wise had caught her neck; and it was indeed well that Hubert passed by Hutchin's when he did. He ran instantly and got some water from a pump in the deserted yard.

"Bless me! why, it is the little Dillingham," he cried, "the girl who told me—to——"

Sue Dillingham, catching her breath, looked up and caught at his hand, apparently alarmed at seeing him there.

"Oh, I'm all right now; you go on! Don't waste time!" she gasped.

This Hubert declined.

"What are you doing here?" said Hubert, with some sternness. "How did you come to be hanging up there like that?"

He felt that he was being played with.

"Oh, go on; go on!" gurgled Sue, pointing to the little square of white above the long red wheal of the railway, which was Green Lane station on the Thorsby and Clinton line.

"Not till you have told me!" he said, firmly. "Come, out with it! What were you doing there, and how can I tell that you won't do it again as soon as I'm gone? Do you know if nobody had passed, you would most likely have been dead in an hour!"

Sue was impressed by his tone.

"Would I—dead?" she said. "Well, I'm glad

being dead is no worse than that. It's not half as bad as the cane at Board School. That's something Agnes Anne Jacox doesn't know! But go on, will you; go on, or you'll miss her!"

"Miss her? Who?" said Hubert.

Sue's look of infinite contempt travelled from his straw hat to his dark brown shoes.

"And me that told you, too," she said; "surely you needn't pretend—not to me!"

"I don't," said Hubert, laughing in spite of himself; "what I want to know is, what you were doing up on the haystack, hanging with one rope round your waist and another round your neck?"

"Slipped—there!" cried Sue; "got on the ridge stridelegs, and hitchin' along to get a better look, I put my foot on a place that slid. I slid too. Now you know! Quick!"

"Then you were not trying to hang yourself?"

"Of course not," said Sue, "was only trying to see what you two 'ud do! But don't tell Ede. She'd never forgive me. Wanted to see how they do love-making—nice people, I mean. Not sit-together-in-the-park on moonlight nights on an iron seat; no, nor kiss-in-the-ring on Farne Height on Bank Holiday; but nice—you know!"

"You young brat!" said Hubert; "and so you got me to come here so that you could watch—are you not ashamed of yourself? And your own sister too."

"No," said Sue Dillingham defiantly. "I wanted to know; Agnes Anne Jacox always thinks she knows such a lot, and our Will, he stays out late, and I daren't! 'Cos of father, you see! And 'sides, he only walks with cooks, and—oh, anybody. Not like you—and our Ede!"

"Susan Dillingham," said Hubert solemnly, "you'll surely be hanged!"

"Not twice," retorted Sue quickly; "was once; you chopped me down. Can't be twice. Law

doesn't allow. I've heard father say so! Now, will you go on?"

"Not to have you following my tracks, my young lady. Have you been reading detective stories?"

"Don't know what they are; but, if you don't go, Ede will be coming back. And she'll row me, and you'll lose your chance. She won't go to Green Lane again, neither!"

"I won't stir a foot till I've seen your back go over that hill," said Hubert; "I won't be an exhibition, nor make Edith one. No, nor yet an object lesson for your friend, Miss Jacox!"

Sue clasped her hands—her mother's gesture.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she sobbed, quite suddenly. "I've worked so hard to make this come right. And now you go and spoil it! Go on!" she commanded, shaking him fiercely by the sleeve. "I swear I won't go again on the haystack. I'll feed the chickies—Mrs. Hutchin lets me. I stay behind to do it; but Ede, she likes to go on to Green Lane station. I don't know why. But if you are not a fool (like Agnes Anne Jacox), you'll go on and find out what takes her there. Perhaps it's to meet Alf Hazel. I shouldn't wonder. He's dead in love with her, and has got a bigger wage at the yard than you have! Will, he says so. He is in Will's office."

"You—little—reptile!"

"All right; but go!" acquiesced Sue cheerfully, "I've got the hens' meat here. Then I'll look for the eggs. We get ours here now, not at Cheasely Farm any more. I thought you would like to know! Chuck! — chuck! Chucky — chucky — chuck!"

And Hubert was left alone, with Green Lane station drawing him like a magnet across the waste.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SECOND IDYLL OF GREEN LANE

"EDITH!" he said gently.

She was standing at the old corner, up the steps and a little to the right. The spikes he had pulled out ten years ago had never been replaced. Yonder, at the far end of the weather-beaten platform, mending it with a hammer and plank, was the old station-master. He seemed hardly a day older, his mind made serene by the contemplation of passing trains, and comfortably occupied by his solicitude for the score or two of tickets he issued and took per day. As a relaxation, he gossiped with whichever of the two neighbouring signalmen happened to be off duty. His life, indeed, was a railway-junction idyll—a junction where two lines branched off, but at which none of the big through trains ever stopped. Even goods trains fought shy of it, carrying their merchandise to other and better equipped stations.

"Edith!"

The girl turned with a quick, half-frightened look. She could not get the wistful, almost despairing expression out of her eyes quickly enough.

"Edith—what is it? I demand to know!"

This was Hubert's hospital manner and Salveson temper.

Thump! Thump! came the station-master's hammer from the platform. *Scree-eech* went his saw on a nail. He said something too distant to be more than guessed at. Hubert glanced at the signal-box, which used to be a better tower of observation

even than Sue's haystack over at Hutchin's. It had been moved down nearer to the embranchment of the lines. There was only a short, stumpy, shunting signal in the place where it used to stand.

Hubert brusqued the preliminaries and put his arm about Edith's shoulders. "You must tell me," he said gently; "I see by your eyes!"

"I have not been crying," faltered Edith, unconscious (so at the proper moment it is given to women) of the circling arm; "I only like to come to Green Lane—for the sake of old times!"

It was a lame enough answer, but somehow it pleased Hubert.

A whistle in the distance—the approach of two long streams, one of black, one of white smoke—another whistle, and a long train of "empties" and coal trucks clucked past, idly, casually, as if it had nowhere in particular to get to that day. The engine-driver and stoker caught sight of the two figures, standing close in by the railings, noted better than Edith the position of Hubert's protecting arm, and being ready-witted and genial men, looked back and blew kisses to them, as an encouragement, so long as the train was in sight.

Hubert felt murderous. Luckily, however, Edith never raised her head, and as for the station-master he took no more heed of a train of empties passing within three feet of the heels of his boots and the tails of his second-best official coat, than if it had been in another and less noisy world.

Wheeze—Wheeze—Gr-r-r-r! went his saw. Then, *Thud—Thud* his hammer.

"Edith," said Hubert, just past her ear, "you love me, or you would not be here. I have told you that I love you, and I have told your father——"

"What!" cried Edith, with a quick, nervous glance; "you have not spoken to father? Oh——!"

"Yes," said Hubert; "he asked me take your empty downstairs rooms, when I spoke of going to

Challoner's, next door. And of course—of course I could not——"

He hesitated, watching the hand of the station-master rise and fall away at the end of the platform, keeping a little ahead of the knock which arrived heavy and dull on the slumberous air.

"Because of me?" Edith murmured, her eyes raised now, fixed not on Hubert, but on the pennon of smoke, which, all white now and light as a feather, was wreathing over the face of the moorland in the track of the retreating train. The festive engineer had shut off steam, as he ran down the hill into Clinton with his clucking, bouncing "empties" behind him.

"Because of you—yes!" said Hubert, drawing her slowly to him. (What a blessing about that signal-box!)

"My little girl," he said, his voice (thought Edith), oh, so firm and dear, "you are going to marry me!—and soon!"

"Am I?" she cried.

She was looking at him now, but the pride, the dash, the defiance, even the independence seemed curiously gone out of her eyes.

"And soon!" he continued, almost fiercely, to take advantage of that yielding mood, which, he well knew, might not last long.

"Yes," she said.

But whether the reply was question or agreement, interrogation or exclamation, Hubert could not tell. Nor can I give any instructions to the printer. He must let it go at a comma.

"I have only two pounds a week, just now," he continued; "we will need to be very careful. We can't keep a servant——"

Edith nestled closer. (Bless that crumbling platform, and that diligent station-master!)

"Oh, I am *so* glad!" she exclaimed, "it would not be the same at all with a servant!"

And then he knew. He did not kiss her. She did not kiss him. Only their lips mutually sought—and found.

Caràta—Caràta—Caràta!

"Oh, a 'fast one'!" cried Edith, with shining eyes, moist, but not this time with tears. She was excited, and clapped her hands like a little girl again.

Caràta—Caràta—Car-RA-ta!

A very fast one—the "high-level" express indeed, pouring eddies of smoke, green flashing engines, two of them, no less, dining-saloons, lofty first-class corridor carriages!

The station-master had flung his hammer behind him, kicked the odd piece of wood to the side, hidden his saw, and now stood proudly in his place with his hands at attention, saluting, as he did daily, the pride and glory of Green Lane station.

A flash of white faces at windows. The guard's van going past with a final *woof*, which carried all the station-master's shavings after it, leaving only a little thrill of their hearts, a gladness that they were standing thus, hand-in-hand. The white spars hid them.

They walked back very silent. They could not speak to the station-master, though Hubert had a wild, idiotic idea of leaping the barrier and communicating his joy to the old fellow, who had seen them as children munching bread and sticky with jam, and who had let them punch cardboard for tickets. But a glance at Edith's face stopped him. She was grave again, and eager to be on the road towards home. But Hubert promised himself the pleasure of telling the old fellow all some day—yes; they would walk out together—some Bank Holiday . . . *after!*

They found Sue with a dozen eggs in a basket, standing demurely outside the farm. She gave Hubert a look to intimate that she had kept her

word. She had not "spied." Honour to whom honour—especially among thieves!

"Sue," said Hubert, putting his hand fraternally on her shoulder, "this is my wife. We are going to be married on the first of June!"

Edith looked at him in flushed amaze. But all she said was only: "Oh, Hubert, are we?"

. . . . .

Sue worked this out by herself afterwards.

"'Tisn't at all as Agnes Anne Jacox said, nor is it as I supposed. I always thought our Ede would have ordered anybody about. But she doesn't. Why, she didn't even know the day of her own wedding! She only just said, 'Oh, are we?' like that, soft as jam-roll! Well, I never did. Catch *me*, that's all! And Ede—I never would have believed it of our Ede!"

And, indeed, that night, when left alone, Ede could not very well believe it of herself.

CHAPTER XXII

AND LOVE THEREWITH

IT was some time till evening, however. They went back over the dreary brow of the common, the débris heaps all turned to gold and jewels—a Tom Tiddler's ground of the heart. At first Sue walked a little behind, with the kind apparent intent of allowing them to talk freely. But Hubert, who remembered the haystack, felt his back fairly creep with the keenness of Sue's observation. So he recalled her. Indeed, it was hardly the time for speech yet. They formed no plans for the future. Sue walked demurely on the far side of Edith and triumphed over Agnes Anne Jacox.

"That's his father's place!" she thought to herself. "Ha! grocer's assistants, indeed! Mrs. Doctor Hubert Salveson will have the pleasure of *not* leaving her card on the likes o' you, Miss Agnes Anne Jacox!"

They arrived at 109, Bourne Street. Sue was bursting. But Edith seemed to wake suddenly, and in a low tone said sharply to her junior: "Now, Sue, you hold your tongue!"

"But are you not going to tell them?" she whispered, amazement in her face. She had expected to come to her own at once.

"When Hubert thinks it right!" said Edith, speaking the proper name with a wonderfully soft intonation noted by Sue—who charitably concluded that her sister was going "dotty."

Mrs. Dillingham looked up. She was reading a novel about the conversion of an atheist, to an

exceedingly depressed (and bandaged) out-and-outer. Already he had nodded three times, and had been reproved by his wife. Emma Dillingham had told him that if the reading was doing him any good she would go on, but she was not going to make guesses at all those long words only to be grunted at.

"Moreover," continued Mrs. Dillingham, who had not had her husband under her hand for a long time, "I believe you were going to sleep, and this book was recommended from the pulpit by Mr. Marchbanks! From what I understand, it just fits your case, and if your heart were softened by your troubles you could not be so ready to doze off like that. It isn't right of you, Ned."

"But I wasn't, Emma," disclaimed the out-and-outer. "I did not mean anything of the kind. I think it is that stuff the doctor gave me this morning that makes me a bit drowsy!"

Such being the state of the case, it is small wonder that the incoming of Edith, her sister, and the doctor was greeted enthusiastically by one at least of the students of fictional theology. Even Mrs. Dillingham sighed, not ill-content; for "incommensurability," with several adjectives before it, does put a strain on the reading powers of people who left school at ten, and have only read the Bible since, and that mostly in church.

The out-and-outer held out his available hand to Hubert.

"This visit is not to be charged in the bill," he said, laughing. "But where did you pick up the girls? Met them coming home from the farm with mother's eggs, eh?"

Hubert dodged Sue's frown, but was conscious of Mrs. Dillingham's anxious look. Edith remarked that she would go up and take her things off.

"You go too, Sue," said her father; "and see here, wash your face and look if there's a brush in the house! Why, you are not fit to walk through

the streets. You have been all over that farmyard, after the eggs, I'll be bound!"

Sue moved slowly out. She dared not disobey, but she signalled piteously to Hubert not to "do it" till she came down. She was very anxious to learn, so as to be upsides with Agnes Anne Jacox in knowledge. Hubert smiled good-naturedly. Yes; he felt that her services in sending him that day to Green Lane station certainly left him somewhat deeply in Sue's debt.

It was a pleasant room, the kitchen of the Dillinghams', and Hubert looked with a new intention at the shining appointments. There was the scoured white-wood dresser, with the ranges of plates above, and the drawers and shut cupboards below.

The range—no, he would not have to pay for that. The armchairs—two—a few other ones, besides the big white-wood oblong table, now covered with its fringed cloth of red-and-black. It could be extended for Edith to do ironing upon. But such things were, at that moment, hidden from Mr. Hubert Salveson. The three who were left talked of indifferent things —of the yard mainly, and when he, Ned Dillingham, would get back to work—of how he would make them aware of themselves on the "bank." And all the time Mrs. Dillingham eyed the young man suspiciously, wistfully, as he sat on the sofa and played with the ribbon of his hat.

Then Hubert's heart fluttered suddenly. He heard a footstep on the stair. Sue? Not a bit of it. Sue—his trained stethoscopic ear had told him that she had never gone upstairs at all. Indeed, she had slipped into the little scullery behind, where was a bit of soap, by the side of the fixed tubs, which were the glory of the two "Dillingham" houses. Here, with the door "on the crack" and knowing that if discovered she would get her ears boxed and be sent upstairs for good, Sue performed a very perfunctory toilette. She partly dry-cleaned herself

with the corner of the rough towel, and partly top-dressed her hair with her black, semi-circular celluloid catch-comb used as a rake. With that, and soap on her ringlets, she hoped to pass muster.

She would wait till Edith came down, and then in the fuss that followed there would be no time to think about her.

Edith came down in a "princess robe" of cream-coloured oatmeal cloth, which she had bought at a bargain counter of Leysham and Leysham's in East Dene, and had made up herself. The extravagance of such a thing on the part of a working-man's daughter had been commented upon at more than one meeting of the Old Cats' Club.

As a matter of fact, the oatmeal cloth dress, made from a damaged remainder, had cost just thirteen shillings—lining, buttons, and everything as you saw it. It had served her a year, had been cleaned once, and then the flawed piece had made a very nice cape for coming home in from church on winter evenings. But how were the Old Cats to know all that? Besides, they did not want to know.

This Saturday afternoon, as she went, even in the thrilling disorder of her mind, to ask Hubert to stay to tea, Edith had added one real extravagance—a sea-green neck-ribbon carrying her sole ornament, the little gold locket her father had given her on her twenty-first birthday. It went well, that blue-green ribbon, with the rippled coils of her Venetian-red hair.

Hubert rose at her entrance. Behind was the flurry and slam of the washhouse door. Sue meant to be in at the death. But she did not reveal her presence. There were geraniums and calceolarias in the Dillingham window, partly for the effect of light and colour, also to shut out the yard; partly, too, because the pots were company to poor Mrs. Dillingham when she had nothing else to think about.

The sun from the west always struck among them

about this hour, making translucent ruby and gold of the flowers, and rendering splendid the little room and plain cottage furniture.

But surely never had Moon-Washington "rickle of brick" held such a gracious flower of beauty as Edith Dillingham. She hesitated a moment on the threshold; she knew his eyes were on her; she did not know whether he had spoken or not. That he would do so she never doubted.

Hubert took her hand and said slowly: "I have asked Edith to be my wife, and she has promised to marry me——"

"No, he didn't," burst out Sue; "he never did ask her! He just *told* her; and the day too! She daren't say it isn't so. Now then, I know!"

At this everybody laughed, except Mrs. Dillingham, who put her hand in her capacious pocket in search of her handkerchief. And then, not finding it, lifted her black-beaded apron to her eyes and sobbed undisguisedly into it.

"Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do without my Edith?"

The out-and-outer put a huge hand on her shoulder and patted his wife gently.

"Why, lass," he cried, "just what your mother did without you, when I come along and took you off wi' me. She cried, too, didn't she?"

"She had other daughters," said Mrs. Dillingham, mournfully shaking her head and refusing to be comforted.

"And how about me, mother, if you please?" cried Sue shrilly. "I've been long enough at school anyway; I'm sick of it. I want to come home. I know more than Agnes Anne Jacox, and, after a bit, I could work every bit as well as Edie—if our Will does call me 'Little Skinny Blackhead!'"

Edith put her arms about her mother, while Hubert had all he could do, as a responsible surgeon, to prevent his patient shaking hands with his son-

in-law in such a manner as materially to retard his recovery.

"Cheer up, mother," said the out-and-outer; "it was bound to come some time. There was that Alf Hazel, that Will has for ever on the doorstep, and——"

Edith looked round to check him, in some indignation.

"I never would have married Alf Hazel—if it had been ever so!" she said sharply.

"Ah," said the out-and-outer, "that's very well, missy; but from what I hear Alf has double the wage at the yard of your man!"

Hubert drew a long, happy breath. He loved this atmosphere of man to man, and each man for his daily bread. Another (Tim, for instance) would have been shocked by the out-and-outer's rough talk; but Hubert had left conventions behind him. Indeed, he had hardly ever known them. To be accepted as a fitting husband by the best and the most beautiful girl in Thorsby—to be, in her father's phrase, "her man"—why, the very words put iron into his blood and strength into his heart.

Tim might marry for position, or money, or anything that pleased him. He was not Tim. He was Hubert Salveson, yard surgeon at Pritchard's, and was in receipt of two golden sovereigns a week, upon which he was going to marry! He had them in his pocket now.

Folly, idiocy, and deliberate throwing away of his chances! So the talk would run. He knew it. But then Hubert Salveson did not care. He had thought the thing out in the long, lonely days in the garden, with Tim mooning about with his poetry books, and the busy "drool" of the world outside coming to his ears—the world where all were working except himself.

These honest, plain, owe-no-man-a-penny folk—the very pile of silver in the corner of the dresser

to pay the Moon-Washington collector on Monday—the hearty, natural goodwill, the truth-speaking, the rough Thorsby manners, and this fine, fair flower of an Edith growing up amid it all. For him! He could have thrown up his hat. What a world!

He had his own life to live. He had a profession—a handicraft, if you like. If his father would be friends with him, so much the better. But Surgeon-General Salveson had lived his own life, chosen it, sought this doubtful by-way, and halted in that pleasure-garden; but still, on the whole, had passed his life laboriously and happily in a hard-working profession.

So would he, Hubert Salveson. He did not ask a penny from any one. He would write to inform his father of his intention, as a son ought; but he would also do as a man ought—a man who has taken upon him certain responsibilities, being of full age and sound mind. He would marry Edith, and ask the permission of none.

All these thoughts ran hastily through Hubert's mind as he turned over in his pocket the two sovereigns he had received that day as he passed the pay-desk at Pritchard's, and the Scotch cashier had said, "Guid day to ye, doakter!"

What a tea that was! Edith poured it out. The out-and-outer behaved, and made no outrageous attacks on any one's household gods. He had, indeed, taken to Hubert from the first. The evening sun shone. He had but to catch the dear, lingering look in Edith's blue eyes fixed upon him, to be arrested by the wonder of her hair, to see how exactly right she had placed the little bow of ribbon—green like that—about her neck.

How differently she talked from the others—ah, how differently from any one else!

The spoons played a pleasant tune. The cups rattled—plates also.

"Come, doctor!" cried the out-and-outer, "you

are not eating. That's your second cup of tea, and you never even drank your first."

It was true. Edith had taken it away without saying a word, and given him a fresh one. And yet they say that women are blinded by love!

But Sue, eating right and left, watched the pair with wide-open eyes over her fifth slice of bread and jam, secure for that afternoon from all interference, and feeling that she was gaining every moment some new facts (or theory supported by facts) wherewith to triumph over Agnes Anne Jacox in the great science of love.

"Come, Emma," said the out-and-outer, after all was over, "you and I will go into the parlour a bit. I want to hear more o' that book. About four chapters 'll do the trick, I think."

"Nonsense, Ned," said his wife, recovering some of her humour; "stay where you are. Let Edith take the doctor into the parlour and show him our albums; they are full of pictures of people he has never seen in his life. You have never seen our photograph albums before, have you, doctor?"

"Oh yes, he has!" cried the irrepressible Sue. "I've seen him watch them from the other side of the street, time and again, from under an umbrella too, and it not raining a drop!"

"Look here, young woman," said the out-and-outer, "you are gettin' to know too much. You put on your hat, go down to Posthlewaite's at the East Dene ferry, and bring me a copy of *Lloyd's*."

"Oh," said Sue, "I know where I can get that paper ever so much nearer."

"It's last week's I want, I tell you, and you can only get it at Posthlewaite's. On with your hat now, and be off with you."

"As if I didn't know what that was for!" sneered Sue, as she closed the door. "*I* wouldn't have listened at their old keyhole. And after all I did for them too!"

CHAPTER XXIII

A CRUMPLE IN THE ROSE LEAF

WELL, no more will we. At least the secret of the ballot shall be observed. We shall only publish results. I know what they said. When I was younger I might have told, or rather retold it word for word. A riper chronicler must confine himself to ascertaining facts; though, on such a subject, a few fancies may also flower his page.

Such as that when the woman you love cries, the best way to stop her is to take her promptly on your knee, tell her repeatedly that it is all right, that she is to cry as much as ever she wants to. Then she doesn't want to, and stops, such being the nature of her kind.

But she does not move as you might think. She sits up, or doesn't, as the case may be. But she doesn't leave. She may give notice to quit, but she stays. Let her, say the wise. Get as much pleasure as possible out of sitting in one chair before marriage; you will find two more comfortable afterwards.

Then of course, various serious subjects were discussed, in this pleasing economy of furniture permitted to young lovers.

Imprimis, whether Hubert Salveson, M.B., C.M., Edin. (present) had, or had not ever "made love" to Edith Dillingham, equally present. The gentleman aforesaid sustained, with fervour and address, the negative. He had been in love—he was in love, he would remain in love. But; mark him well, he

had never "made" love. The love had made itself.

Miss Dillingham with fewer words, but a larger quantity of gestures, ably sustained the affirmative.

"Never made love to me, Hubert Salveson? Why, you never did anything else."

"That night of your father's accident?" he inquired.

Edith looked steadily at him.

"That was worse than all," she said; "you knew your advantage, when I could do nothing else. You took command of me, and have never given me a chance since. If only I had been wise, I would have stuck to what I told you that day on Farne Height. But I was foolish; I did not go back there again by the longer road. Instead, I went to Hutchin's farm, and that alas! was near to Green Lane station, which has proved my undoing."

Hubert opened wide his arms with the gesture of one who uncloses a bird-cage that the captive may flee away. But Edith was too deep in her argument—also too comfortable, to dream of moving.

"I believe you thought I would come to Green Lane," he said, trying to get her to look him in the face.

She flashed her eyes upon him, blue as forget-me-nots, and between lips of coral he saw for a moment the fine line of her white teeth. She smiled. Then she dropped her eyes.

"I did not think; I knew," she said.

Then they talked business, strict, stern business. How much money would it take to furnish a little house. Must see the house first, Hubert thought. Edith moved the previous question. There were many things that would go into any house, such as tables, chairs, chests of drawers, ah!——

A sudden flush on hers, an access of folly on Hubert's part, culminating in an "Oh, you darling,

and to think it will be all ours—yours and mine, Edith!"

"I can't believe it yet," said Edith, recovering a little, and setting her hands to the arranging of her hair, with that primæval gesture instinctive to all women in such emergencies.

"Well, how much?" That sounded practical, and kept them aware of themselves.

"About eighty to ninety pounds," was Edith's estimate. "You see," she said, "it depends so much on the fixtures. You don't know what fixtures are? Oh, Hubert, and you a doctor, and know so much; why, your father owns hundreds of houses!"

"And I only own you," said Hubert, and would soon have been on his way to another crisis, when the voice of the original Edith of Farne Height stayed him.

"And you have to find a house to put me in," she said. "Two pounds a week," repeated Edith several times, her finger to her lip; "that's easy enough, and we can save money as soon as we get started. I won't have any three years' hire system, though. I've known so much unhappiness come through that. Nor I won't have a Moon-Washington house, and have to work all our lives to pay for it."

"And then perhaps not want to live in it, when all is done," added Hubert.

"I've about sixty pounds of my own," said Edith, with a modest pride; "money that my aunt Christina left me—mother's sister in Scotland, you know. It isn't much, but it will help."

Hubert gasped. This was wholly unexpected.

"Why, Edith, you are the moneyed one. But I can't take your money—you—you wonderful pet."

"Oh, yes," said Edith practically; "it isn't much, of course; but mother has it safe in the savings' bank for me when I get married. Sue will have the same."

"You won't want to marry a poor penniless fellow like me," said Hubert, drolling; "you, an heiress—why, where were my eyes? I never once dreamed of it."

"Don't make fun of me," she said, pouting; "once I wanted father to take it to help him with these houses, but he wouldn't. 'We don't want our little Ede to leave us quite with the empty hand, do we, mother? No—no, you will keep it for your own goodman.' But of course, I protested that I never meant to get married, and would stay with them always and always."

"You have changed your mind, eh, Edith?"

"Yes," she said gallantly, "I *have* changed my mind. I never thought I should."

Upon which saying, Hubert Salveson thought himself the finest fellow in the world.

Then the fashion of his countenance changed. He looked in his pocket-book, and took out certain papers therefrom.

"I haven't got much, I'm afraid," he said, dolefully, "not so much as you!"

"Never mind," said Edith; "of course, you haven't been at work long yet!" Hubert laid his all in her lap.

There was Tim's "fiver" untouched. He did not confess how it had been wrenched from Aunt Kidson at the point of the bayonet. Edith might not understand. Then—the bulwark of his state—came five-and-twenty golden sovereigns, worn out of the patience of an indignant father by the methods of the importunate widow. (Tim again!) Lastly five pounds, seven shillings, and four pence, saved out of his three weeks' wages.

"Why," cried Edith, indignantly, "you have lived on nothing! You'll kill yourself."

"Oh, no," Hubert expostulated, "I have had my meals from the cook-house, and generally, since you took being cruel to me, I sent half of them back. I wasn't hungry!"

"Oh, you poor, poor boy!" cried Edith, emphasising her pity. Hubert entered into details, that this valuable tender chord might continue to vibrate.

"Oh, just wait till I get you to take care of!" said Edith.

And as for Hubert, he wished for nothing better.

. . . . . .

There was a noise of voices loud in the street, approaching 109. "Come along—do!" cried one, pressingly. "Ede will be glad to see you; I know she will. Father too!"

Then Edith rose hurriedly, whispering: "Let's go into the kitchen to father and mother. That's Will, my brother, with some of his chums. He often asks them in on Saturday night. Oh, how I wish he wouldn't! It just spoils it!"

And Hubert, with a curious sudden chill of his feelings, followed her into the kitchen. But he would not let Edith suffer, and laughed it off. It was not her fault, of course. She could not help what her brother did, and yet—something jarred as he heard the rough words without, and the too loud, too "jolly-good-fellow" laugh of younger Thorsby—a roughness not at all like that of the out-and-outer, who was of an elder day, and in heart and manners as good a gentleman as anybody.

"You see we have come back," said Hubert, before the young men had had time to pass the gate; "we have settled where to buy our chairs——"

"Not at Gantley's, I hope," said Mrs. Dillingham, anxiously; "theirs are only sticks glued together—and as for their bedroom furniture, I would never allow——"

"Hush, mother," said the out-and-outer, "here come Will and his crowd. They're not bad fellows, doctor. But—you let me tell them the news in my own way. I don't think they will be very fresh

with Owd Ned Dillam, even if he has one hand in these bandages of yours!"

Master Will entered, and stared in a rather taken-aback way at Hubert, seated easily by the geraniums, his arm on the window-sill.

"Arm no worse, father?" he inquired, deciding to let Hubert's presence go at that.

Dr. Salveson was introduced to "Mr. Hazel of our office," a dark young man with a huge moustache, who might have been a first-rate draughtsman, but was without doubt a poor conversationalist. Indeed, he said hardly a word the whole evening. He only glared at Hubert as if he could have eaten him without spice or condiment.

There was also Jo Challoner, the Dillinghams' next door neighbour, clean-shaven, glabrous, un-wholesome looking, skinned like a large mushroom done in oil. He, on his part, never once looked at Hubert, but also never took his eyes off Edith. There was also a tall youth, with a meandering backbone, and hair cut so short that his bullet head seemed like a slightly moss-grown skull. He slunk into a darkish corner, and said nothing. But he laughed at everything that was said, however serious in its bearing, in a mixed springboard voice, which descended into the cellar and anon vaulted to the ceiling with agility and impartiality.

He was known as "You, young Dick"! And nobody stood on any ceremony with him. He was told not to laugh like an ungreased waggon wheel. And then, when he stopped, it was "You, young Dick, if you don't know any better than to come into a house and sulk——"

Hubert did his best. Naturally, he had an easy way with every one. But for some reason he found the present company difficult, and at last rose to go.

"Edith, see the doctor to the door!" commanded the voice of the out-and-outer, who had been trying to extract some information as to "futures" (that is

to say, vessels to be built at the yard) from underneath the silent and Saturnine moustaches of Mr. Alfred Hazel.

Hubert shook hands with Mrs. Dillingham, nodded to his patient, and bade the new-comers pleasantly good-night. There was a curious silence in the wide kitchen while Edith passed out with the doctor, as bidden by her father. All the men seemed to be listening their hardest. But there was nothing to hear. For Edith went all the way to the outer green gate with Hubert before she spoke.

"Oh, I am so vexed; I could cry," she said; "you will think I am like *them*!"

Hubert could not reassure her as he wished, owing to the parliament of Bourne Street in conclave assembled that pleasant summer evening in many fours and fives about the gates, and in the little dusky garden plots.

But he found means notwithstanding.

"Never mind, little girl," he said gently and yet swiftly, as her hand lay a moment still in his grasp, "it will matter very little when I get you to our little house—you and I. Let our watchword be the First of June; that is, if you still mean to share with me those sixty pounds!"

She smiled, Aprilwise. He lifted his hat, smiled at her with his eyes, and was gone—tall, swift and strong, with purpose in every step. Edith turned and went straight up the stair to her own room, from which she could watch him turn into Cheviot Road.

But she was dreadfully conscious that through the open door, before Hubert had time to get out of earshot, Will's strident voice had come in words that brought the hot blushes to her cheeks. "You're out of it proper, chaps—you, Alf Hazel, and you, young Dick! Bet you four to one that's our Ede's new 'bloke!'"

CHAPTER XXIV

"RAT-TAT-TAT!"

LONG before he stretched himself on his perilous scissors bed, in the corner of his room at the yard, Hubert thought no more of the awkward irruption of Will Dillingham and his companions. The wonders of the day carried him into a crowded and delicious dreamland.

Edith loved him. Green Lane was now a sacred spot—his first; his only! Of course. Dear, dear Edith! How lovely she had looked! Never any one in the least like her. And the little house—so glorious it would be. Life, life; the life he had dreamed of was upon him. Even those rough fellows—after all, they were more akin to him than men who thought only of amusement, horse-racing, motoring, laboriously killing time, or yet more wearily arranging to kill it as it came along.

Of course, he knew (or thought he knew) the faults of the working-classes. They laid bets, though many never had seen a race-horse in their lives. He had seen the rush for the sporting editions of the evening papers. They "spotted winners." They had their favourite jockeys whom they would follow throughout an entire season—in the betting columns.

But still they acted squarely and honestly, worked hard, earned their money, and in the main spent it well. A little drink, a sparring match, a row of horny knuckles shoved into another man's face; but good husbands, good fathers—even fair-to-middling brothers. So Hubert, that first night, as

he lay listening to the tugs hoot out of the river, and the grind of paddles on the late ferry-boats, thanked God for Edith, for the out-and-outer, for Mrs. Dillingham, even for Sue. The good, clean, united home-life fascinated him. And as for those others—well, when once Edith and he got into a house of their own, they could choose their company, save and except those he had already named. But it was otherwise with Edith.

With a woman's quick instinct, she felt that there was more danger than she had thought, or than he thought. Had she the right thus to take him? Four or five times she stole from beside Sue, lighted a candle, and began a letter of renunciation to Hubert. But she destroyed each one before she had written more than the first lines.

Finally, she sat looking at the stars so long, praying in her simple, child's way, that she almost dropped asleep. And Sue, when she got in beside her, flounced off to the far side of the bed with sleepy grumbles and complaints as to her "being cold enough to freeze a pig."

Then she too slept, and with the counselling morning, the ordinary Sunday tasks all sweetened by her remembrances, she forgot all save the love that had leaped upon her so suddenly. And Hubert—ah, there was nobody like Hubert. But while her father promenaded in the yard with his morning pipe, shirt-sleeved and meditative; while the late sleepers drained the dregs of their rest above stairs; while she carried up her mother's morning cup of tea; while she descended again to prepare breakfast, and from the stairfoot advised the rest of the family upon its toilet, Edith had only a very little weight on her heart—which was the ghost of a fear.

She was taking him out of his class. Would he be happy in hers? Was there any betwixt and between?

But with the "rat-tat-tat" of the postman, first

heard far up the street, and approaching in a sort of crescendo, thus: "Rat-tat-tat! *Rat-tat-tat*! RAT-TAT-TAT!" Edith's troubles were over for that day. Thorsby has a Sunday delivery, as indeed we have seen before. Edith, in the early days of her acquaintance with Hubert, had received letters from him then—even when she had told him not to write on pain of her displeasure. And, of course, others had written also. She could not help that. She never answered one of them. None of them could tell Hubert a single thing about her; save a little merriment, perhaps, at times, which never did any one any harm. Yet but little even of that. For the bit of education her father had given her over in East Dene had raised that subtle barrier between her and the young men she met, which is fatal to sentiment. They were uneasy with her. She was not "jolly."

They wrote Edith Dillingham down as "above herself." She thought herself this, that, and the other. When you sent her a letter, she did not answer it, even when you put in a stamped, directed envelope. She even gave the envelope to her brother to take back to you. And he laughed and made fun, unless you could "punch" him.

Then she did not go to dances. When a fellow did go to church and sit through that dreary sermon (Scotch), she always had an umbrella, if it was raining. She said: "No thank you, I can find my way quite well alone; indeed, I prefer it!"

In Master Will Dillam's set Edith was accounted pretty, but she was certainly not popular. Still, you never could tell, and the letters continued to arrive. Either she or Sue answered the door, tripping it very smartly indeed, and Sue, sisterly kind, would slide one of Ede's letters into her pocket every bit as quick as Edith herself. She wondered if the like would ever happen to her.

But this morning, all unexpectedly, there was a

letter, besides the usual forms, statements, Moon-Washington Extension Acts, for the out-and-outer.

Edith thrilled instinctively, it went into her pocket. It was from Hubert.

"Dear" (it said), "I am not going to protest as I used to do. We love one another so much that we are going to face life together, you and I. I have wondered much at your great goodness to me. I know you are beautiful, but already I have thought so much about your face that now I cannot recall it in the least. I could explain this phenomenon medically, but I prefer to refresh my memory by calling to see your father this afternoon about five. If you like, we can walk to church together. If that is, for any reason unknown to me, impossible, at any rate I shall see you. The first of June. The little brick house somewhere! Your aunt's sixty pounds! You and me!

"If you can tell me anything else that matters, I shall be obliged to you.

"HUBERT."

What Edith did with this epistle, standing with hurried fingers and flying eyes, divided betwixt love and the frying-pan, it is difficult to recount. It was a series of clever conjuring tricks. The omelette ("Oh, the darling!"). Scrambled eggs! ("Oh, how could he know?) Turn the bacon ("Just—just what I wanted to be told!") Father's coffee ("and to go out this morning himself to the letter-box!") Not too much butter on the toast, mother does not like it ("in the chill and . . . danger") "Yes, father—nearly ready" ("to send this to me—*sob—sob*—I mustn't cry—they'll see what a little goose I am!). Yes, you can come down, all of you. It's all ready. Yes, mother, I'll come and hook it up the back."

("*And I thought he didn't love me!*")

CHAPTER XXV

HUBERT TAKES ADVICE

HUBERT SALVESON considered it his duty to inform Mr. James Pritchard his employer of his intentions as to matrimony. Mr. Pritchard was always busy and more than usually unapproachable on Monday mornings, as if the day of rest had not agreed with him. This is, it appears, a well-noted fact in other business houses. "The Boss" is to be left severely alone on Monday mornings.

But Hubert did not know this, and none (in the office) had good-will enough to tell him. He was "an incomer," and had better be left to find out things. So he was permitted to mount unwarned to the door of the Crow's Nest.

He knocked.

"If you don't let me alone, I'll——"

The words burst from within, hoarse and snarly, as if through the cracks. The poker's ominous jingle filled out the sentence.

Nevertheless, having no reason for fear on his conscience, Hubert opened the door and went in. The little grey man with the tight lips lifted himself from the stove into which he was pushing, grinding, and stamping a mass of correspondence, which had been marked "Personal" or "Private." Some had been brought down from his house, and the rest had been sent up from the office. The office boy always, if he could, "lagged" to see what would happen.

"Oh, it's you, doctor!" he growled, his stubby hair standing up fretful and menacing, his sensitive

eyebrow tufts quivering like hostile rapiers. "Well, what do you want? This is Monday morning. I have always this to do! Oh, I know them! No, I never open one of them—never one! Why should I? I know them by sight, outside the envelopes. This is an application for a bazaar—these church subscriptions—new organs—east windows—poor of Thorsby parish (and I pay thousands of pounds in rates and taxes!)—St. Aldegonda's Rest House—that's an application for a loan. If they want money, let them work for it as I do. If they have any claim upon me, let them write to the firm—plainly. It will be opened and answered by my clerks. But the scoundrels won't take the responsibility—if it has got 'Personal' marked on it. Laziness—sheer laziness! They don't want to. I'll clear out the office, that's what I will do! *Ugh—Ugh! Ugh!!!*"

The last represent the exhaustion of breath caused by vehement shoves with the heel of his boot, complicated by thrusts of the heavy-hooked poker.

One letter escaped, rebounding after a vigorous assault. Hubert saw in a moment it was in his father's handwriting. He was tempted to say nothing. That his father should be writing to his employer could bode no good to him. But he successfully resisted the temptation.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, as James Pritchard stooped to fling the big square envelope after the others, "but I think that is from my father?"

The fierce, tense countenance turned savagely upon him.

"You know anything about your father writing me?" he demanded.

"No, sir, I do not," he said, "but—he may wish . . . to tell you something to my—to give you some information about me, I mean. And I would

not wish that—I mean that I would like to remain in your employ on perfectly clear terms, so that neither my father nor any other should be able——"

"That'll do," snapped James Pritchard; "business is waiting. Have you got a match? Well, then—set these a-going, and I'll—see—what the—*pestilence* Charles Salveson has got to say to me!"

The dashes were punctuated by strokes of his wiry fore-finger disembowelling the letter with the seal and crest of Surgeon-General Salveson of the Manor, Thorsby.

He glanced it over first. Then he read aloud, pulling his eyelids down till the black pin-point of each pupil just scintillated across the paper. His nose, also, curled and uncurled curiously, something like a probably hostile, certainly irascible bull-dog, whose temper and digestion had been spoiled by being chained up on an inappropriate diet.

"Sir,

"I am in receipt of a letter from my second son, Hubert Salveson, in which he informs me that he has entered your service as resident surgeon at your shipbuilding yard. He also informs me that he proposes to contract a matrimonial engagement with the daughter of one of your labourers—an infamous and well-known atheist.

"I desire to know if these things are true. Also if, being true, you are prepared to take the responsibility of sanctioning them. You are a father. How would you like if one of your sons were to marry my cook?

"Lastly, in the event of your refusing to yield to my just representations, I would warn you that it is written that those who draw the sword shall perish by the sword. Also, that, as the fruit of my special researches, I am able to foretell the date at which wars shall cease, and when there shall be no

further use for all that hateful enginery of battle-ships and cannons, by which you have amassed your ill-gotten gains!

"I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"Ch. Heathcote Salveson."

"Oh, let me get hold of a pen—where is the ink-bottle?" cried James Pritchard, precipitating himself upon them. "I'll answer him!" And he wrote accordingly.

"C. H. Salveson, Esq.,

"Manor, Thorsby.

"Sir,

"Your favour of 19th (undated) received. I run a business, not a matrimonial and lost-stolen-and-strayed agency. I only require your son to do his work fairly while employed by me. I should be very glad if either of my sons married your cook, or any other honest hard-working woman. I heartily wish your special study of prophecy could assure me that they would come to so excellent an end. As for war and rumours of war, they are likely to last my time. And if not, I can build anything you may require from a canoe to an Atlantic liner.

"I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"James Pritchard."

He closed, addressed, stamped, and tossed the letter into the basket marked "To Post."

"Now," he cried, getting up, "I've had enough of your family affairs for one morning. Come back again at five, Dr. Salveson, and I will hear what you have to say."

Hubert moved about all day, studying how this detail of work, and that other process, seemed to bear too heavily on the men employed. He had,

after ten in the morning and two in the afternoon, a good deal of time on his hands. One of these slack-water periods he employed in visiting his "out" patients in their own homes, and reporting on stray "kippers" who had reported themselves sick. But during the afternoon he had found time to dress his report as well. He titled it "Medical and Sanitary Suggestions as to the General Conduct of Work in Pritchard's Yard, designed to effect a Saving in Men, Money, and Time."

"Rather long for a title," he thought, "but I can make the report itself concise enough." And he endeavoured to imitate the style of Mr. James Pritchard himself.

He took the first part in his pocket that afternoon with intent to feed the tiger. But on climbing up to the Crow's Nest, he found quite another James Pritchard from the cyclonic despot of the morning hours.

As soon as Hubert entered, the boss went to the door, which opened in two parts, an upper and a lower. The lower he barred—then turning a wheel within, a simple mechanical arrangement, swung the ladder into guides along the side of the Crow's Nest. Thus they were isolated, and, indeed, the sign was well enough understood by all the yard.

"Have half of this rump-steak," said James Pritchard, cutting into it with a large clasp-knife; "there's bread and butter at your elbow. Help yourself to the beer. I always bring down a good piece of meat in my tail-coat pocket—buy it at Saunders's. They can't cheat me. I'm not going home till late to-night—my wife has something high and mighty on at Oaklands. I haven't told her, or she'd be asking you. I suppose you don't want to do that sort of thing on two pounds a week—though I began on a quarter of that! And then there's that girl you spoke of, eh, lad? What of her?"

This was the very opening Hubert had been waiting for. He could not have wished for better. So into the breach he went.

"That was just what I wanted to speak to you about, sir," said the resident surgeon.

James Pritchard nodded repeatedly.

"I knew it, young fellow!—I knew it! Trust an old dog! Want to get married, eh? Yes? House? Furnishing? A little advance?"

Hubert flushed to his temples. He never could see when this leader and trier of men was leading and trying him. At least, it took him a long while to be sure.

"No, sir," he said emphatically, "Miss Dillingham has a little money of her own—I, to my shame, much less. And I might so easily have saved, but being a fool, I didn't!"

"Two pounds a week will be your saving, lad!" growled James Pritchard to himself. Aloud he said:

"So you are marrying a Miss Dillingham——?"

"The daughter of the man whom you made overseer of the railway sidings and deliveries——"

"Yes, at the request of his future son-in-law!"

James Pritchard slapped his thigh and chuckled.

"A-well—a-well," he said, "he will do his duty, I make no doubt. I've got good accounts of him. Railway folk sorry to lose him and all that. No harm—no harm! But—*eat your dinner, man.* Good Saunders' steak (and rump at that) is not to be treated in that fashion. And so you don't want any advance for furnishing? No? Well, you will be doing it on the three years' system, I suppose?"

"No, sir," said Hubert; "Edith will not allow it!"

"Mirthful Jeremiah!" cried the boss of Pritchard's, "I must see this heiress—this Edith of yours! She has a wise head!"

Then he paused a little.

"Well, what do you want?"

"I wanted simply to inform you of my intentions, sir," said the resident surgeon, simply, "and to ask if you could tell us of a cottage which would not cost too much—and yet—be near enough my work, and—not in or about the yard!"

"Well, there is such a thing as asking and having, doctor," said the master of ten thousand; "of course, I am delighted to be at your service. I have nothing else to do—to think about! Come along now. We will search ourselves. Go—look—see! By the way, what rent do you think of giving? That might be a guide to me."

"Thank you, sir," said Hubert gravely. He thought it was very kind of James Pritchard. He did not at all appreciate the greatness of the condescension.

And the little wiry tyrant grinned and chuckled as he put on his overcoat, found his umbrella, swung the drawbridge to its place, locked the door of the Crow's Nest, and followed his two-pound-a-week surgeon down to help him look for a ten-shilling house!

"'Go—look—see'! Nothing like that!" he said; "a good habit. All that has come out of it!" And he waved an appreciative and even respectful hand towards the seething tumult of the yard.

CHAPTER XXVI

OLD QUAY COTTAGE

"I THINK," said James Pritchard thoughtfully, "that there may be something down by Thorsby Old Wharf which may suit you! You don't know where that is? And you have been brought up in the town? Well, there are some things which I have yet to teach you. Yes, a few!"

The nervous little wire-strung man walked smartly down the narrow private way which led from his famous Crow's Nest to the private door in the great retaining wall, by which he let himself in and out of his yard. *Click*—he had turned the key in the lock. Hubert passed through and found himself in a fragment of rural lane, which, save for a slightly more dusky colouring of the foliage, might have been miles in the country on the sunny slopes of far Hexham or Bamborough. He stared about him in wonderment. But James Pritchard moved on; not, however, south to the station, but riverwards. On the map, the place was in the very centre of Thorsby. Yet, but for the lamp-posts and the corner letter-box, Hubert might have been in the heart of the country. True, there was the rumble of the yard behind, and before, to the left, a forest of masts—the Tresham, Stephenson, and Craster Docks.

They came in sight of an ancient pier. About it clustered some tumble-down outbuildings. But on a height looking over the river were three small white houses, solidly built of stone and whitewashed, not at all after the manner of Mr. Moon-Washington

—green and white, somewhat official-looking, and a flagstaff in front of each one.

"Two of these are occupied by very respectable people," said his guide. "The other is empty, but has been kept in thorough repair!"

Hubert looked his wonderment. It seemed a thousand miles from the yard.

"Yes," continued the head of Pritchard's, "and I ought to know. For I own the cottages and the old landing-stage. My right to the piece of land is, however, a disputed question. There is no doubt at all about my owning the right of way to the pier, that lane through which we have come. So it has been through all the courts for many years: Is the pier mine or the Ferry Company's? And all that has yet come out of it is just that there is an interdict against my extending my yard to the Old Thorsby Quay—while the ferry steamers may bring their steamers to the landing stage, but are interdicted from landing a passenger unless they can provide them with wings. We have stood snarling at each other here for twenty years. So, owing to that, these three houses, the old pier-master's and two belonging to the original village of Thorsby, have been preserved. Now you are to be pier-master."

"I am afraid it will be too dear for us," said Hubert, with a sinking of the heart.

"Well," said James Pritchard, shaking his head, "I feel that I shall be obliged to charge you ten-and-sixpence a week for rent. But I will pay your taxes. There are gas and water, which will cost you nothing. You use the yard supply. And as for coal, you can buy it for pit prices at the wharf below your door. But as a servant of mine you will help me to keep title. For if the cottages go, the land will go also—the road as well, because it is the means of access to my cottages. And continuity of tenure will help. The other two are occupied

by a retired sea-captain and his wife, good friends of mine and very worthy people; you could tell as much by the figure-heads and rockeries. The last is occupied by the curate of the parish, if he wishes to live in the midst of his work, as they mostly do."

By this time James Pritchard was within, looking about him with quick eyes that missed nothing, in which arose something of sentiment, inconceivable in the autocrat of the morning.

"I will tell you something that is not generally known," he said. "I took up my house here many years ago—thirty-five, perhaps—with my first wife. I have always kept the place up. Indeed, I like well enough to do a bit of carpentering here yet, when I can spare the time from the yard. It rests me to bide awhile with old faces and old dreams; better than the reality. Can you explain that, doctor, with your medical science?"

"I understand," Hubert answered modestly.

"Now, I have a condition or two to make," said James Pritchard; "first, what you pay me for this house rests between you and me alone. But I will give you a written lease, properly drawn out for you to sign. Second, your . . . *wife* does not know me, think you?"

"I could not answer as to that," said Hubert, looking a little puzzled. "I don't think so. At least, Edith was asking me to describe you the other day."

"Ah," said James Pritchard, "and you drew a flattering picture, I'll warrant."

Hubert smiled without replying.

"Well, doctor," said James Pritchard, "as you see, I am one man at the yard and another here. I have kept this house through all these years, as that in which I had my best days. You are never likely to have better, and that I tell you, young man. But of late, I suppose because I am getting old, I have felt a loneliness in opening the door, a restlessness

in reading in the room which used to be our sitting-room—that with the asbestos gas fire. Some one beginning as I did—as we did—ought to have it. And when you spoke to me that first day, of the work you were determined to do, and the girl you were resolved to marry, I thought of Old Quay Cottage at once. It is small, but I think you will find little lacking.

"Yes," continued James Pritchard, pointing from one thing to another with pride, "I have put up that woodwork. I fixed the range. I have arranged the fittings and gas-brackets—for the sake of one whom you will never see; and I—well perhaps it is my only hope. Now, I would like sometimes to come here as I have always done, and take off my coat, and do a little repairing with my own hands."

He lifted a kind of hatch in an outhouse. "Here," he said, "are my overalls, my paint-brushes, tools and so on!"

Hubert looked over the brick wall at the flag-staff from which the red ensign flew.

"Captain and Mrs. Broadly will say nothing; they are accustomed to me. The captain went through pretty desperate things for me when he was younger. Besides, they think I'm a little——"

He touched his forehead, smiling.

"Well, maybe I am," he went on, "but this is the little locked-away part of my heart which I have never shown at Oaklands to my lady, nor yet to the four men in knee-breeches waiting in the hall!"

He turned to Hubert, his hair wiry and erect, his eye brilliant, almost defiant.

"Do you wonder I care about the place?" he demanded.

"No," said Hubert, "I only wonder you ever left it!"

"Ah," said James Pritchard, taking his hat off as if at a sudden memory, "going or staying was not mine to choose. My wife died. During the day I

had my work; it was just beginning to stretch out. But after that was done, to come back to the loneliness—the darkness—the emptiness! No, I could not stand it. I had to go."

He led Hubert into a kind of tower, which opened on the roof.

"We used to sit here," he continued, looking seaward. "More than once, I remember, I was pretty near the rocks. And now" (he turned towards the yard, which extended, fuming and roaring, clinking and thundering along the Tor estuary), "behold Great Babylon that I have built!" he said. He made a sort of contemptuous gesture, as for something unavailing.

He led the way down again. All at once he became very business-like. "As this is between ourselves I will call for the rent myself, say fortnightly as will be convenient for you and for myself. Then I shall see—yes, I shall see!"

But he did not say what it was that he would see. He took a little old-fashioned case from his pocket. "Have you given this Edith of yours a ring?" he said suddenly, "an engagement ring?"

"No, sir," said Hubert; "I have not had the time, nor the money."

The old fierce face brightened amazingly.

"Then give her this," he said, "tell her it is something precious, ancestral. For that is true. It was once on the finger of the happiest girl in all the north. May your happiness be longer than mine; I know it cannot be greater!"

Hubert found no words to thank him, thinking of Edith in this daintily fitted nest with the ships coming and going in front. He could see the cosy fires shining, the twilight shutting two people, who loved each other, in unto themselves; while upon the opposite shore, the lights of East Dene sprang into far-hung illuminations—docks, streets, crescents, all in wisps and garlands of fire, from the low

riding-lights of ships to the highest houses on the ridge, where it meets the sky, and in summer clips the tail of the Great Bear itself.

"Well, bring your Edith to-morrow night to see it, about the same hour. And take her the ring. No, do not thank me. I only want to see it on her finger. No; it has no right to go to my sons. They have no concern with it; no one, but I. Good-night! Good-night. I will stay a little longer. I have some things to arrange; some few also to remove. And as I told you, I am not expected home!"

"Good-night, sir," said Hubert. "I cannot thank you——"

"Then don't try," said the little man, suddenly fierce, "but remember, all this has nothing to do with your being at your work at proper hours, giving your whole attention to my interests, and drawing two pounds a week, of which you pay me ten-shillings-and-sixpence for the rent of this house."

"I think it ought to be more," Hubert began feebly. In his innocence he feared lest he should be taking an advantage of James Pritchard, the man who had built all that huge roaring Babylon at their backs.

"Be off now, and see if that ring fits!" cried James Pritchard. "Lord, if it were only I!"

And the door shut so rapidly upon Hubert that the beautifully polished brass knocker clacked of itself.

. . . . . .

"I mustn't spoil that boy," James Pritchard grumbled to himself. "I must keep him to the mark. But two pounds a week, a good little wife, and his nose to the grindstone for a year or two, will be the salvation of him! Even with that Salveson blood of his."

In the parlour of 109, Bourne Street, Edith was exclaiming at that moment; "Oh! and it just fits—

how strange—a ruby heart set all round with diamonds! How good of you, Hubert! I shall always keep it."

Meanwhile—one time the more like a careful house-steward James Pritchard was trying all the window cords and fastenings of the cottage down the lane which led to Thorsby Old Quay. And ere he had finished the lights of East Dene came out across the estuary. He could see them reflected in the upward flowing tide. It was a calm night. He went and leaned his elbow on the sill.

"We used to watch them so!" he murmured, as if talking to some one else.

Then he started suddenly.

"James Pritchard, you're a fool!" he said aloud; "go home, fool!" And carefully locking the door he made his way up the lane to the station without once looking behind him.

CHAPTER XXVII

EDITH INTERVIEWS THEIR LANDLORD

THUS it came to pass that the next day, a little after five, before the mighty evening exodus began to pour from the gates of the yard, Hubert and Edith turned sharply down the narrow station lane which led to Old Quay Cottage.

There was a flush on the girl's cheek. Her lips were very red. But in her heart she meant cold business. They were going to meet their future landlord, who would no doubt attempt to take them in. All landlords did—except, of course, her father. It was a commonplace in the family that Jo Challoner treated the out-and-outer rather as if he were landlord and Ned Dillingham the tenant. But though her father was like that, and though Hubert had no more idea than, say, the average man, she, Edith Dillingham, was not going to be taken in. She had been coached by her mother, and had listened dutifully. Still, she knew better than her mother, and for an excellent reason.

But it was her pretty hands that had done the washing and ironing. She had cooked and scrubbed and swept and polished in the house numbered 109, Bourne Street, for many years. Had the range a fault—did it boil the water too quickly, or heat the oven too slowly—it was she who had to suffer for the irregularity. Edith Dillingham knew a room that would be easy to "do" from one which could in nowise be kept clean. She did not want one of those standing-on-end houses, all garrets

with a sunk flat, now becoming too common owing to the economy of ground space, where everything, coal, water, grate-ashes—oh, lots of things—had either to be carried up or downstairs. Oh, if only the proprietors, architects, and builders had to do the work—all the work—of such a house for six months or so! they would evolve something that would not be so hard on a girl.

At first sight Edith was a little alarmed at the aspect of the lane.

"Won't it be lonely?" she said. "Suppose I want something suddenly."

"You will have the morning for your marketing," said Hubert, wise by a kind of rebound. "I will get my dog, John Bull, down from the manor. . . . Tim will fetch him. He will take care of you; you need have no fear with him, night or day. Besides, it is only a little way after all; there are quite good shops as you turn into the Station Road!"

"That house!" cried Edith, clasping her hands. "Oh, it's lovely; but, Hubert, they will never let us have it for the rent we can afford!"

"Ten-and-six a week, Edith," said Hubert triumphantly. "It was I who arranged it with the landlord!"

"Then there's something wrong inside," cried the practised and not-to-be-imposed-upon Edith; "bad drains or something!"

And she could hardly contain herself as she mounted the steps which led up from Old Quay Lane. She wanted to run. Yet, instead, she stopped.

"How are we to get a cart up to the door—coal, furniture, all that, besides the ash-heap once a week?"

Hubert had not thought of that, but suggested that, as the house had been that of the old Pier-master, there would certainly be every such convenience. The sharp household-wise eyes of Edith

spied out a gate in the hedge a little way up the lane.

"Here we are," she said, and, turning the handle, she found herself on a well-gravelled walk, which led into a little courtyard and eventually to the back door.

"Hubert," she cried, "we will never get this for ten-and-six. But, oh, the laundry; and a place to dry if it's wet. And oh," she clasped her hands ecstatically, "a coal-place which can be filled from the outside! And oh, Hubert, if we only could! But it is impossible. They will want a pound at least for such a house!"

"Perhaps it is the situation," suggested Hubert, "between the yard and the docks!"

Edith shook her head, and pouted her lips under the pretty toque, which became her small head so well.

"I shall see when we get in!"

The back door stood invitingly open. So they passed immediately into the kitchen, and there, in paint-splashed overalls, was a little man in a square paper cap. He stood on the top of a double ladder and he was giving the last touches to a light and pleasing stencilling of china-blue, which ran round the whitewashed ceiling of the kitchen.

"Our landlord!" said Hubert, smiling, and he watched Edith's face as Mr. Pritchard descended. No, she did not know him.

"The young lady who is to be the mistress of this little house o' mine?" said the landlord genially. "You'll excuse me shaking hands. I have been doing the place up a bit, you see. Would you like to take a step round, and if there is anything that needs looking to—why, only just mention it!"

"Thank you," said Edith, with her best not-to-be-taken-in expression, "I will!"

The sharp, grey eyes took *her* in, from the neat plain toque to the hem of her well-fitting dark-

green coat. Then something quivered about his eyes, and he said hastily: "I am at your service, Miss—ah?"

"Dillingham," said Edith. "My father was a foreman with the railway company till he got hurt. Now he is going to be in the yard."

She did not wish any mistakes, and she understood quite well the landlord's glance at her dress; or thought she did.

"He will think we have money," she argued, "or that my people are rich. *I* can't tell him I made this myself out of stuff father got from Jo Challoner as part payment for back rent. But, never mind——"

She became severely practical. Hubert remained mute, and the little grey man, with the paper cap, stood with a piece of "waste" in his hands slowly rubbing at the paint stains.

"We had only thought of giving ten shillings," she began. "Hu—my—I mean Dr. Salveson has not a large wage to begin with, and we are determined not to run into debt."

"I hope that won't part us, miss," said the landlord of Old Quay Cottage, "but, being as you see a stone house and with good accommodation, though small, I could not conscientiously let it go under ten-and-six—paid every Saturday. I couldn't, really."

"Monday is the usual day," said Edith, strong in her local knowledge. The sharp eyes twinkled, with admiration maybe, or perhaps with some secret thought.

"Yes," said the landlord, "I am aware of that. But this being something particular, and having nothing to do on that day, I should be glad to call for the rent myself on Saturday, and see that all was right—any little repairs, you know."

"Well," said Edith, a little astonished, "that is all the same to us, of course. If we are not at home—

gone out for a walk when you call—we could leave the rent with our next neighbours; that is, if they are honest people!"

"They are honest enough—indeed, very good people—as your—as the doctor knows; retired sea-captain and his wife. But, I would rather find you in."

Edith stared at the landlord. She wondered what was the matter with the man. Hubert touched her arm to be silent. It was their first (almost married) confidence of that kind. She understood, and said no more, thinking that the poor man "had a want" as they said in Thorsby.

From the kitchen they passed to the scullery—a marvel of the patient application of thought to making easy all domestic operations.

Edith stood entranced. She had no words to express what she felt, but her purpose was gathering force within her. The parlour, wainscoted with oak, had little book-cases, like those she had seen in Mr. Marchbank's manse, besides fixtures, gas, electric bells. She smiled at this. For there would be no servant. Hubert and she would have to ring for one another.

The window was an oriel, and the view took in the Old Quay, the wide glittering river, constantly furrowed by ships, the crowded slopes and dark ridge of East Dene opposite; above all the evening sky, cut across by the smoke of a passing tug-boat, purple against the basking red-and-ochre of the opposite city.

But it was the bedrooms which decided Edith, and above all the wall-press accommodation. She knew roughly what it cost to build a brick house, and such a house as this could not be let for ten shillings and sixpence a week if all were right. Indeed, it would not be let by the week at all.

They came downstairs again, and stood together in the parlour.

"Well," said the landlord, "I hope that you are satisfied, Miss Dillingham?"

Edith compressed her lips, and something of the out-and-outer's downrightness of speech flashed to the surface.

"Hubert ought to say it, Mr. Landlord," she began; "but he has not had my experience in houses, having had other things to learn and to attend to——"

The landlord bowed to conceal the twitch at the corner of his lips.

"But *I* must," she went on; "and as you have been so kind, I hope you will not be angry. Now, you wouldn't let this house for ten-and-six a week if there were not something wrong. What is it?"

"Ask your—ask Dr. Salveson there, if there is anything wrong," said the landlord. "He is a doctor, he ought to know."

"He doesn't," said Edith decidedly; "I prefer to ask you. Why are you letting us the house far below the proper rent? I know by my father's two in Bourne Street!"

"The situation is perhaps a little out of the way?" suggested the landlord.

"Within five minutes of the yard, and within the same distance of Old Quay station—in the centre of the town."

"People don't like the noise and the smoke!"

"Smoke is healthy enough with that river in front," said Edith; "and as for the noise, it is nothing; even now I begin not to hear it!"

The landlord did not seem to be able to suggest any further explanation, but stood regarding a spot of China blue on his left thumb nail.

"Well," he answered after a while, "even a landlord is allowed to have fancies."

"No," said Edith curtly; "tell me; I would rather know. Is it unhealthy—sanitation bad?"

"Passed this week by the Inspector. There is

the certificate," said the landlord, handing a paper to Edith.

"Fever, then? A death from something infectious—small-pox, perhaps?"

"There has only been a caretaker in the house for twenty-five years, besides occasionally myself—and she was only an old woman to keep fires in the rooms."

Edith gazed at the little stubbly man. As she said afterwards he seemed stubblier than ever at that moment.

"Do you mean to say, sir," said Edith, the practical, "that you have gone without rent for this house for nearly thirty years?"

"I do mean it," he said; "I have a reason."

"I think you should tell it to us," said Edith, "if we are to live in the house?"

The stubbly landlord of Old Quay Cottage took off his paper cap, and, instead of looking at Edith, he gazed out of the window.

"It was an idea I had," he said; "I could afford it. I also began life in this cottage with the woman I loved—who is dead!"

"Oh, I am so sorry! I ought not to have asked you; I did not know!" cried Edith, her hands clasped, and with tears already brimming in penitential eyes.

The landlord's thoughtful gaze did not leave the topmost spires of East Dene ridge, still touched by the sun, and ruddy through the cloud-banks.

"So because of that, and because of my feeling for your husband I wish you to live in the house where I was once happy. For the same reason I should like to make an errand here sometimes on Saturdays, when your husband is at home, and see the house of your happiness—which was also that of mine!"

As the grey landlord did not seem inclined to say more Hubert took Edith's hand, and led her away quietly. She looked back.

"I should—almost—have liked to—kiss him," she said. "Oh, Hubert" (she began to sob), "if I were to die, would you be sorry like that? As long, I mean?"

Hubert reassured her with that prodigality as to engaging the future, which is characteristic of very young lovers.

Edith was silent till they turned into the busy Station Road. Then, moved by some instinct, she took his arm for the first time in open day on the highways of Thorsby. Hubert was rejoicing at this, when he looked down and caught her eyes. They were far away. She was not thinking of him at all.

"What is it?" he said, gently, without being offended.

"I wonder—if he likes me?" she murmured

"Who?"

"That poor, poor landlord," she said. "Oh, I am so sorry for him, losing his wife so long ago!"

She repeated this as they knocked at 109, Bourne Street. It dwelt on her mind. "So long ago!" she murmured. It seemed to make it harder.

And at Oaklands Mount, that palatial residence of the distinguished shipbuilder, the Lady Ethelreda Pritchard, daughter of the Right Hon. Earl Conquest, was informing her husband that when he honoured her by his presence at her dinner table, he might at least appear clean.

There was, it was evident to her ladyship, a spot of China blue enamel on his left thumb nail.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SECOND SITTING OF THE OLD CATS' CLUB

"YES, my dear, it's neither 'he said' nor 'she said,' but the straight truth," said Mrs. Skipton (otherwise Mother Shipton), "some of it; indeed, I had it from Mrs. Waddleham——"

"I must beg of you, Mrs. Jane Skipton, if you wish to retain my respect and a place at my table, never to speak again of that—person! Enough that your conduct in bringing such a person into this house has been overlooked."

It was Aunt Kidson who spoke. The Old Cats' Club was in session. They sipped their tea daintily, mumbling little "shortbread biscuits," made by the Scotch cook; with much ill-will, be it said. "Master Hubert used to like them; but yon pack o' back-bitin' auld besoms! Certes me! Set them up!"

Mother Shipton laid down the uncrumbled piece of short-cake on the edge of her saucer, and carefully poised the cup in the middle. Then she rose and began to put on her veil.

"It appears that I am not welcome in this house, Mrs. Kidson. I hope I know my pride, which is also a pleasure, to go when I am shown I am not wanted."

All present rose to appease her, save and except Aunt Kidson, who only wrapped her hands the tighter in her little lace apron, pursed her lips, and looked prim as prisms—also prunes.

"No," said Mrs. Skipton, declining to be entreated of them, "my husband what's in his grave, would

never have permitted it. It's only since he's gone that I've been treated like this!"

She put her veil down so emphatically, that she tore it away from its moorings on her many-towered bonnet.

Miss Fly hastened to whisper in the ear of the hostess:

"Tell her you did not mean what you said, quick," she whispered.

"But I did," retorted Aunt Kidson, out loud.

"Hush!" said Miss Fly, "she has something to tell. Think of that. About Master Hubert; she has better opportunities than any one else. Say that you didn't mean it, even if you did!"

The hostess weakened and covered her defeat with a false bluffness of manner that deceived nobody.

"You always were hot and hasty, Jane Skipton," she said, "taking offence where none was meant. Sit down and have a fresh cup. That's gone cold by now. If I said anything, it was only on account of that Mrs. Waddleham. And you know for yourself, Jane Skipton, how she treated, not only the members of this club, but also me, your hostess. And, humble though I may be, I never forget that I am a near relative of the proprietor of Thorsby Manor."

The said proprietor spoke to his "near relative" once a week, when she presented her household accounts.

However, such as it was, the apology was accepted, the presence of two new Scotch members helping perhaps to modify the situation. The first of these was a distinguished lady, Mrs. Gribton McNab, who had once lived in Edinburgh. She referred to this fact frequently, as if the mere former domicile were a patent of nobility.

She was genteel of the genteel, and had a soul above fancy work. She worked socks in circular

stripes of red, pink, and royal blue, and she was a boarder of St. Aldegonda's Rest House.

"These are for the children of the poor," she said, with a fine fresh New Town accent; "the colour juist shoots them, ye see!"

The combination was certainly enough to kill at twenty paces, but Mrs. Gribton McNab meant to say that bright colours were suitable to children of poor (and apparently colour-blind) parents.

The other visitor was a maiden lady, who had no continuity in conversation, or indeed desire to have any. She sat far back in the corner of the room, and at every tale of human weakness and revelation of the depravity of her sex, Miss Lucinda Gall threw up her eyes, sighed, and shook her head. It was sad, certainly, but what better could you expect.

"Oh, this generation! This generation!" she murmured, applying for her third cup of tea. Aunt Kidson looked severely at her. Three cups of tea for a new-comer was rather strong. Even Miss Fly would have thought a little before taking this liberty. But this mournful spinster merely ejaculated: "Oh, this present generation!" And added, "*Two* pieces, if you please," without being asked if she would have one.

Mrs. Skipton, whose mind was still seething after storm, inwardly wondered how long that cross-grained old woman, Mrs. Kidson, would stand it. She had her own ideas that it would not be long. She was glad now that she had stayed.

But cunning Miss Fly drew the best of all red herrings across the trail. She introduced the name of Edith Dillingham.

"If I mistake not, it was of the Dillingham girl you were going to speak," she said, addressing herself directly to Mrs. Skipton.

The latter repressed a strong desire to say: "Yes, when I was interrupted!" But the vision of the cupboard and the coming "little drop of somethink"

caused her to suppress foolish pride, which indeed is vanity.

"Yes," she sighed: "I am informed on the very best authority that the foolish young man, Mr. Hubert Salveson, has been cast out of this, his father's house, has been inveigled into that of the atheist, and that he will probably marry that dreadful man's daughter."

"Marry her—oh, the disgrace to this noble and ancient house!" cried Aunt Kidson. "Oh, the poor misguided boy! What shall I find to say to his poor afflicted father, even now grieving for him, upstairs—two flights—to the left. Oh, my dear kinsman; my dear, dear kinsman!"

This she said. But Miss Fly winked at Mother Shipton, and Mother Shipton back at Miss Fly. Miss Fly whispered behind the tea-cosy that if Mrs. Kidson cared to say one word to the 'dear, dear kinsman' upstairs, she would probably be ordered to pack and go. Mother Shipton treasured these last words to repeat to her hostess when she got a chance. Thus do these particular Christians love one another.

"Ah, I fear it is true—too true," said Miss Fly. "I myself met him on Tuesday afternoon in the Station Road, and she had his arm—monstrous! In open day! A defiance of a good parent! I wonder some people are not afraid of a judgment!"

"It will surely overtake them," said Mother Shipton severely; "but that is not the worst. I heard that from Jo—I mean, from a gentleman who lives in their neighbourhood, that the young man is never out of the house, and that he and the woman are even going out looking for a cottage! That looks like marriage."

"And what is more," said Mrs. Skipton, "it is a known fact in the yard that Mr. Hubert has been closeted for hours with that heathen man, James

Pritchard, and that his advice is now asked about everything! The men don't like it, Jo says."

"Something underhand!" said Aunt Kidson, nodding.

"Oh, this generation!" groaned the new-comer. "I'll be obliged to you for another cup of that very nice and agreeable beverage! *Two* lumps, *if* you please!"

And Miss Lucinda Gall pushed along her cup for a fourth supply right under the nose of the indignant Aunt Kidson, murmuring: "Oh, this generation!"

"In my young days," said Mrs. Gribton McNab, beginning a yet more lurid arrangement in orange and green wools, "when I lived in Edinbory, in Torpheechan Street, there were no young lasses that would have thought of carrying on like that. Oh, no; they waited till they were decently aged and sober-like, and then they took up with the first man that had a faceable income. But nowadays—ah, ye may say so!"

"*Two* lumps, I said!" persisted Miss Lucinda Gall patiently. She had watched while Mrs. Kidson, with a smile of grim triumph, filled the teapot to the lid with hot water, and immediately poured the brew into her cup. "I would just as soon drink hot water, with a little milk as good tea," she said. "It's better for the stomach. But sugar I must have! And two lumps, please!"

"When I was in Edinbory, living in Torpheechan Street in the West End——" began Mrs. Gribton McNab, all over again.

But the quick eye of Miss Fly saw that the storm was going to break. She intervened on the eve of battle, greatly to the disappointment of Mother Shipton, who, having seen her own friend, Mrs. Waddleham, opprobriously treated, was eager that the same fate should overtake the two Scotch pensionaries of St. Aldegonda's.

"If James Pritchard is concerned in this affair," said Miss Fly, with asperity, "it is evident on the face of it that there is something disgraceful going on somewhere. I have not personally the acquaintance of his noble wife, the Lady Ethelreda. But she goes to the same church—Mr. Eaglesham's—such an apostolic young man, Mrs. Skipton. He chants the Lord's Prayer in the true Gregorian style authorised by the Pope."

"That man of sin!" cried the scandalised Mrs. Skipton.

"I was speaking of Mr. Pritchard," said Miss Fly, swiftly recalling herself, "and so, I doubt not, are you. It is my conviction, that, if, as we are assured there is something underhand, his dear and noble wife ought to be the first to be informed of it. I propose therefore, that we should, here and now, prepare a letter—anonymous, of course—to put the noble lady on her guard."

There was rather a mixed response. What would they say? "Oh, they need not say anything definite, you know," answered Miss Fly. Who should write the letter? "'I,' said the Fly."

And so with Miss Lucinda Gall continuing to murmur, "Oh, this wicked, wicked generation"—and keeping her eye on the sugar-bowl, hoping to be able to secrete some lumps in her pocket, the momentous document began to be indited.

"When I was a young lass in Edinbory, afore I went to bide in Torpheechan Street, I once wrote a letter like that about anither young lass. And, ye'll hardly believe me, but after a' she married a meenister! Aye, mony a time I hae passed her manse, and lookit at the brass plate. I wondered if she showed the letter to him, and he took peety on her for greetin'. I wadna put it by him. Ministers are saft; at least, a heap o' them in Edinbory, when I leeved in Torpheechan Street. There was a meenister——"

"Hold your tongue," said Miss Fly, who was enduring the torments of infrequent literary composition. Aunt Kidson had left the room in search of the celebrated little sealed bottle. The eyes of all the company followed Miss Fly's hand with admiration as it formed the letters which were to arouse the most tempestuous passions in the breast of the noble Lady Ethelreda. Miss Lucinda, who suffered from the disease formerly called "light-fingeredness," but now more genteelly "kleptomania," cleverly secreted up her sleeve and in her apron-pocket, six lumps of sugar, a reel of sewing cotton, two hanks of "whity-brown," a paper of snuff, three pearl buttons, and a small china dog from the mantelpiece.

She was casting up her eyes and murmuring: "Oh, this generation! whatever are we coming to?" when Aunt Kidson returned.

Miss Fly read aloud her composition, prefacing it with the usual disparagement.

"If only I had had more time," she said, simpering; "but this, I trust, will not be without its effect."

"To the noble Lady Ethelreda Conquest or Pritchard, Oaklands Castle, etc. Madam, It is with pitying hearts that a few sincere well-wishers, having taken friendly counsel together, and thinking of your ladyship's sweet face as seen in church in your family pew, desire to put you on your guard against the lamentable effects of the intimacy which your husband is forming with the disgraced son of Surgeon-Major Salveson of the Manor House. Also we desire to direct your attention to the encouragement he is giving him in his shameful project of marrying the daughter of an atheist, whom he has recently taken into his employment. This man has several daughters——"

"There is only another, a little black-headed school-girl," said Mrs. Skipton, who did not like Miss Fly to have all the credit.

"No matter," snapped Miss Fly, "several daughters; *two* is several, isn't it? And that will do James Pritchard's business, or I don't know the meaning of that hooked beak in the middle of Lady Ethelreda's face!" And she continued her epistle particular.

". . . . several daughters, and, however terribly the friends who withhold their names from this letter of warning feel to trouble you, we cannot conceal from you that Mr. James Pritchard has been seen more than once in company with the eldest in the vicinity of Old Quay and Station Road. Likewise one of your sons stopped at the door of their hovel in an automobile and remained some time there——"

"I would not put that, do you know, dear Fly," said Aunt Kidson; "she won't care what her sons do. It's old Pritchard we have to think of."

"Very well," said Miss Fly, dutifully scratching out the final sentence regarding Mr. Egerton Pritchard, "we will confine ourselves, as you well remark, to the old bird. Ah, I will teach him not to answer my letters, or take the least notice of them when I only asked him for a little biennial subscription."

She looked at the letter with her eyes fairly blistering the paper.

"How shall I finish?" she said.

"Put something affectionate," said Aunt Kidson, "it may touch her!"

"And full of Christian compassion," added Miss Lucinda, eyeing the other china dog. "He looks so lonely, poor fellow!" she murmured.

"Wha-a-a-at!" cried Miss Fly, looking up sharply from her letter.

"I mean *she* will—the poor lady you are writing to," said Miss Lucinda.

"How will this do?" said Miss Fly: "'Trusting that your plain words of reproof and admonition

will be the means of breaking up this foul conspiracy against your peace, against your husband's good name, and also against a poor young man, honourably connected with the well-known local families of Kidson and Salveson.'"

"Very good; but perhaps the order ought to be reversed," said the hostess, much pleased.

And then Miss Fly added the inevitable feline postscript. "The young woman's name is Edith Dillingham, otherwise Dillam, presently residing at 109, Bourne Street, Cheviot Road, Thorsby."

This time the old cats of Thorsby had not parted without, at least, trying to scratch!

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DILLAMS RECEIVE QUALITY

MISS FLY'S pleasant letter procured for Edith the immediate honour of a visit from Lady Ethelreda de Conquest, *mariée* Pritchard. A landau with two bays drove to the end of Bourne Street, stopping at the corner of Cheviot Road.

A lady, such as Bourne Street had never seen, descended. She was dressed severely in a tweed skirt, cut plain, and the same length all round. This was surmounted with a man's cutaway coat, and a soft felt hat with a black-cock tail-feather in it. She walked with a pronounced "heather step," and the Bourne Street urchins remarked with joy the round lumps made by her knees as she strode along the pavement in her big, high-laced, thick-soled, heelless boots. The general boy-opinion as to these was expressed thus:

"Just like when they knocks our heads from the inside, w'en we tries to look into a circus tent—jimminy, I wish we could hers!"

And they followed the Clumper, as she was instantly baptised, to No. 109.

"Oh, Jinky-jims, she's goin' to the Dillams," said the awe-stricken Tommy White, to his comrade Jinkins, "that's 'cause they own two 'ouses; mother says so."

"There was one o' them there 'puffers' there the other night, they calls 'lot-o'-mo'-wheels' or something, you know; and Ede Dillingham walks out with a chap in a topper—lah-*deé*-dah!"

And Master White imitated what he considered

to be the correct manner of squiring your sweetheart, when you are so fortunate as to be able to wear a topper every day in the week, and carry your gloves in one hand and an umbrella in the other.

"Bah!" said Jinky-jims; "father says he's only a kind o' doc' down at the works—and that he don't get as much wages as he does. That's why he wears a topper. He's no great catch, mother says—she wouldn't let our Jinn Ann take up with 'im!"

"Well, maybe not, Jinky-jims," said Tommy White; "but oh, say, just watch that old daisy. It's just like's she was goin' upstairs all along the pavement. Now she's at the door. Let's watch. There; she's in. That was Edith Dillingham. Teddy, my big brother, sez that she's pretty, but awful proud. Can't say I see anything partic'lar in her myself."

It was indeed Edith who had opened the door. She knew most knocks, but this was a new one; a sort of "open-in-the-name-of-the-law" knock. It was not the Moon-Washington collector's, nor the water-rates, nor the gas man—a wild fear came over her—the fear of the unaccustomed for the buff envelope handed in by the telegraph boy.

But what Edith expected was very far from what Edith saw—a lady (she knew that at a glance); but a lady who had amused herself to masquerade like a gamekeeper. Could it be any of Hubert's people?

Her astonishment grew when she heard the visitor announce her name and errand.

"I am Lady Ethelreda Pritchard of Oaklands Hall, and I have come here to see Edith Dillingham."

She was going to add "or Dillam," as in the informatory letter; but a glance at the girl's clear resolute face, checked her. Edith bowed, and showed the lady in. Lady Ethelreda mounted the

two steps from the garden walk at one stride. Edith paused only to throw a word to her mother in the kitchen: "Some one to see me, mother!" and the two were face to face in the little parlour.

"Will your ladyship take a seat?"

Her ladyship had not thought of doing so, having frequently found the advantage of height in her disputes with her husband. But there was certainly something quiet and, yes, ladylike about the girl. Edith immediately took one opposite to her visitor and waited to be enlightened. The Lady Ethelreda was outspoken. She prided herself upon it; perhaps because it went with her costume and hob-nailed boots.

"I am told that you are encouraging a young fellow, one of the Salvesons of the manor; good family, if the father is an old fool——"

Edith's amazement showed plainly on her face, but she allowed her visitor to finish.

"He is coming to the house," continued her ladyship; "does he lodge here? Come, tell me, I have a right to know. I have received a letter with regard to it this morning; an anonymous letter, I admit. Ordinarily, of course, I do not pay any attention to such things, but this concerns my husband!"

"Your husband?" said Edith, a curious agitation, half-pity, half-fear, coming over her. The poor lady must have gone crazy. "I do not know your husband."

"Do not prevaricate to me. I will have the truth!" cried the Lady Ethelreda, with a stamp of her mailed heel, equal to that of any of her knightly De Conquest ancestors.

Edith suddenly resolved that she should have it, at least so far as she was concerned.

"I do not in the least understand what you mean," she said, with one hand on the little cottage piano her father had hired for her after she came home from the High School for Girls at East Dene.

"But I understand that, in some way, you refer to Mr. Hubert Salveson, resident surgeon at the yard. I am engaged to be married to him. We are to be married on the first of June."

And her clear blue eyes looked directly into the bold black ones of the Lady Ethelreda.

"Ah," said she, "so far good! But what of my husband?"

"I do not even know who is your husband!" said Edith.

"What!" cried the lady; "I am the wife of Mr. James Pritchard of the Thorsby and East Dene Shipbuilding Works."

"The yard?"

"I suppose that is the ordinary name for them. But, tell me" (she had become considerably less abrupt now) "have you or your sisters been in the habit of meeting my husband?"

Edith looked puzzled and then a little amused. Clearly she must be gentle with the poor lady.

"I have never seen Mr. Pritchard," she said, plainly and simply; "Hubert said that there was a young Mr. Pritchard, who very kindly brought his medical things here in his automobile the night my father was hurt; but I did not see him. I was busy with my father!"

"And your sisters?" said the astonished Lady Ethelreda, beginning to regret her haste.

"I have only one; she is at school," said Edith, glancing at the clock. "Why, there she is, I believe."

There came a rush without, the sound of wars and rumours of wars. Deadly deeds were being done with books swung in green baize bags—a clatter, a bang, and the door of the parlour burst open. "Oh, Ede," cried Sue, "d'you know, I hit Agnes Anne Ja——!"

Here Miss Susan Dillingham stopped at the sight of the curious-looking stranger installed in her father's chair, with one leg crossed over the other

like a man, presenting a high-laced boot with its massive iron heel straight at her.

"My sister," said Edith mischievously, "my only sister!" Then the woman in the daughter of the De Conquests came out.

"This will teach me," she said, taking a letter out of her pocket and handing it to Edith, "what attention to pay to these abominations! Have you any idea, Miss Dillingham, where this may have come from?"

Edith took Miss Fly's "private information" with instinctive disgust.

"Yes, it's nasty, I know," said Lady Pritchard; "but look. That may help!"

"Some one who wishes harm to come to Hubert," Edith murmured, "that is evident enough. But stupid; oh, so stupid!"

She hesitated a little, thinking of Jo Challoner No, it was a woman's letter; of that she was certain. The name of Kidson made her, as the children say, "warm."

"There is, I believe, a kind of relative of Hubert's named Kidson, who keeps house for his father, Dr. Salveson at the manor. She has always hated him I know, though he has never said it. It was she who prevented his father from letting him practise as a doctor——"

"Not let him practise——? Why, I never heard of such a thing," cried Lady Ethelreda. "The man was a doctor himself; dosed, and drugged and chopped half India, my brother the Governor-General included!"

Sue had vanished. Edith could hear her mother fidgeting in the kitchen. She was nowise ashamed of her mother, nor had need to be.

"I will tell my mother," she said; "she was busy when you came."

Lady Ethelreda reached out her hand suddenly, as a man does to a man. "Come, we will be

friends. You must forgive me. It wasn't that I cared about my husband, nor he about me. But I did not want him to make a fool of himself; James Pritchard is too old. Besides, he has his business to attend to."

Edith found herself, without any clear idea why, shaking hands heartily with the Lady Ethelreda Pritchard. Then she brought her mother in. The good woman was trembling, but a certain douce Presbyterian dignity upheld her. After all, she had only to act as if the minister were in the parlour on his "stated visitation"; with this difference, that the Lady Ethelreda could not be asked to offer up prayer.

The lady was gracious, had been in Mrs. Dillingham's native parish when a girl; such a pretty place. But she soon turned again to Edith. She glanced at the music on the piano.

"Greig," she murmured, "Tosti, Stephen Adams—yes, I have seen these names about. Do you play, Miss Dillingham?"

"A very little," said Edith, flushing. She was conscious that the piano had not been tuned. She had not been able to spare much out of the house-money, lately.

"Where were you taught?"

"By Herr Von Baer, at the East Dene High School for Girls."

The great lady stared and pursed her lips slightly. What she was thinking was: "The old story; educated out of her sphere; such a mistake!" What she said was: "Then you are cleverer than I; I never could learn. I did fencin' and worked in the 'gym' instead. But I like shootin' and huntin' best!"

She pronounced these words without the "g," which Edith thought curious, having had carefully to cure herself of that local elision.

She was now on her feet to go. She shook

hands with Edith and her mother, saying to the former: "I hope you will let me know where you take up house. I should like to continue the acquaintance, now that you have forgiven me for my quite intolerable rudeness. It was horrid! I shouldn't, I'm sure, if I were you!"

Edith smiled, but said nothing, and the great lady tramped off in the midst of a patter of superior sounding adieus, importing nothing in particular; while on the landing above, her skimp school-dress retired to her knee, Sue Dillingham practised the "Heather Step," for the future edification of Cheviot Road Board School, A Division, Girls' Side.

And what is more astonishing, when she spoke of continuing the acquaintance with Edith, the Lady Ethelreda was quite serious; entirely so, and it was quite a week before she forgot all about it.

CHAPTER XXX

THE GREEN LANE STATION-MASTER

IT was noticed in the yard that the out-and-outer's declarations of iconoclasm were by no means so frequent nor so lurid as they had been in days before his accident and the advent of Hubert. The fact is, that Mr. Marchbanks' predecessor in the Scots' kirk, a very enthusiastic, dogmatic, and intolerant man, had so pursued the out-and-outer, that, to put an end to the pursuit, he had begun to buy "Iconoclast's" paper, that he might find powder-and-shot wherewith to answer him. It was at that time also that Ned Dillingham had dropped church-going, had taken to the fields of a Sunday, all the while performing his duties to his fellow-men, with a completeness and friendliness which shamed many more active "professors."

In the main, Ned Dillingham succeeded well in his new post. He had the art of commanding men, though inclined to the side of strictness. He had the heavy hand, and there was not a man who dared not dance as the new superintendent piped. Among those who had looked for a better time under the new "boss," was Jo Challoner, a steady "skipper," or shammer of sickness. He soon found out that it was a different thing to approach Owd Ned Dillam as a neighbour and landlord, and Mr. Edward Dillingham, when on his beat as Inspector of Deliveries.

Consequently Jo Challoner hated the out-and-outer more than ever; because of the past turns he owed him; because he would not allow him to

shirk his duty on the landing-bank; but chiefly because of his favour for Hubert Salveson, and the marriage which had begun to be prepared for on the first day of June ensuing.

This sallow, deceitful-eyed, old young man, with the toadstool skin that always seemed on the point of bursting into a chilly perspiration, had long watched Edith's growing beauty with envious eyes.

His own wife he hated, because, though dying on her feet, it was by inches, when he wanted her to die by yards, and in her bed. She was, as said Charles II., "a most unconscionable time a-dying."

When Edith was no more than fifteen or sixteen, already Jo Challoner's mind had begun to work about a possibility. About the same time, having learned from the half-hearted diagnosis of Dr. Budden that she was not likely "ever to be herself again," he had watched with a greedy eye that too slow declension. In the meantime, he always stood and regarded with a keen sense of injustice the passing funerals. One of his brothers, whom he surprised by his tears on the occasion of his wife's death, said to him in astonishment: "Your heart is graidely kind, Jo—but I never thowt as what ye were so fond o' Marie in her lifetime? It would have been a comfort could she but see you, Jo."

"It is not that," said the mourner fretfully; "it's that they are aw' gettin' a change but me."

Which in after times, being repeated by the brother, became a saying in Thorsby.

Many a time also, Jo Challoner remained half an hour at a time on his way home, staring in at the chemists' shops, deploring his ignorance of the more delicate poisons, and the unfortunate necessity of "hanging by the neck till you were dead," if found out.

That stern form of words always sobered him. There was no jesting with the hangman's drop.

But he thought what he could have done with his knowledge, if he had had young Hubert Salveson's position and chances.

Then the news of the approaching wedding came upon him with a shock. His wife might die the day after, and what the better would he be? He threw himself down on the floor of his front room, once after seeing Hubert and Edith pass, their eyes upon each other's eyes. He bit the carpet, even his own hands. He suffered agonies of jealousy, merely in thinking where they were by this time, what doing—what saying. Then on such occasions he would fling hastily on overcoat, turn up the collar, slouch his hat, and follow in their wake. He need not have troubled. Hubert and Edith were quite oblivious of all save themselves.

The warm, sleepy smell of brick-fields moved them deliciously; the very one they had played in on the way to Green Lane. Then from the moor-top the view of the blue tidal wave flashing farther and farther out, till they saw, or rather Edith could see, when Hubert pointed her out, a big collier coming through the tumble of the bar, and before her a little fussing tug, spouting black spume, and lugging her bluff, red, upturned snout first this way and then that towards the coal-slips of East Dene.

Jo kept a long way behind them. It was Saturday afternoon, and they had all the day to themselves. It was their last Saturday but one as lovers, as Hubert did not fail frequently to remind Edith. As if she did not remember! As if she ever thought of anything else! Men are so—but there, they are all like that; all the nice ones, that is. So Edith took Hubert's arm a little tighter. She was an easily understood, uncomplicated girl; also, of course, the nicest kind.

These two held their way towards Green Lane, and they were going to tell the old station-master—who, Hubert averred, would not care a farthing one

way or the other. But they were going, because Edith wished it and, of course, it was all the same to Hubert.

Out on the open face of the moor they gave Mr. Joseph Challoner something to do; nice crawly work among brambles and the burnt stalks of last year's heather. He had to go bent double, making quick rushes, and then dropping flat—an eager, indomitable little black figure far across the tawny waste.

There was Green Lane. How had they got there so soon? It used to be such a long way. They actually passed Hutchin's farm without noticing. Curious! And they might not even have observed Green Lane itself but that the little station erected itself across their path, the double track of the Clifton Railway running high on a piled embankment because of the morasses.

"Yes, he was there—oh, Hubert!" The same old station-master! They read his well-remembered name on the little weather-beaten placard, not now supplied to stations.

ROBERT COSSAR, STATION-AGENT, GREEN LANE STN., T. & C. RY.

He was another of Thorsby's transplanted Scotsmen, but of the elder type, and seeing the two young people come hastily up the steps he met them at the gate with a shake of the head, grimly kind. He had seen so many pairs do the same thing. Ah, young folk!

"Ye've juist missed her!" he said.

"No, on the contrary," said Hubert "I have just found her."

"Eh, what's that ye say?" cried the old man; "ow aye, ye'll be sweetheartin' nae doot—aweel—aweel! Little it maitters to you whether ye catch the 4.30 or the 6.10. Na, na, Guid keep ye, bairns, frae a' evil!"

"Oh, don't you remember us, Mr. Station-master?" said Edith, "we know you so well!"

"Deed no, ma young leddy, I canna say that I do; but, doggit, I do kind o' mind too——"

"The big boy and the little girl who used to come every Saturday, with a baby——"

"And anither wee-wee boy, that grat for ginger-breads!"

"Well," cried Edith triumphantly, "this is the big boy that used to carry my baby sister. I am the big girl you used to let punch the bits of cardboard for tickets, and never sent us away, though we made crumbs on your steps."

"Bless me! bless me! I'm mindin' noo!" cried the old Scot, pushing his big grey beard up with one hand, as if to assist the operation.

"And we are going to be married," said Hubert, "that little girl and I, next Tuesday week!"

"Bless ye! bless ye baith, and may ye hae—but there, what am I claverin' aboot afore the lass? Come ben, come ben; there will be the 'high level' express in half an hour. But till that ye will juist tak' a dish of tea wi' me—that ye wull!"

The old station-master of Green Lane was a bachelor, and Edith cried between laughter and pity at his contrivances. But they made tea together. They drank it, many cups. And so absorbed were they, that only the creaking of the pull-wires of the signals awoke them to the necessity of seeing the biggest "fast one" of the day go by.

"Dearie lass," cried old Robert Cossar, "but there maun be something no canny aboot ye. For I haena dune as muckle for a maid—it will be near on to thirty year! Ye nearly garred me miss the bye-gaun o' the 'high level'!"

So they stood on the platform, Hubert and Edith, just by the gate (but inside this time, for the first in their lives), the old station-master at majestic attention, while the "high level" came on towards

them, with a new and wonderful sound. The Ca-rà-ta—ca-rà-ta, which they had been accustomed to, was now accompanied with a jarring of the earth, and a swing sideways like the giving of india-rubber under the foot. Edith caught at Hubert's arm nervously.

"That's the moss," said the old man, "they gang on and on, cuttin' at the time sheet, to run the mile in fewer seconds, till some day—pray the Aldmichty, bairns, that it be na in my time—she will fair cowp the crans and burrow in the moss like a mowdiewort!"

Then old Robert Cossar saw them to the white gate. He even opened it and set a foot without, which they had never seen him do before. He went so far as to jest.

"See here, missie," he said, "ye are a fell fond lassie, and you sae bonny; what for tak' up wi' a young speldron like him? Here am I, and there's my hoose. Mirover, I'll ha'e a pension next year. Noo, what say ye? I'll sweer it's the first offer I ever made to a lass. Ye winna? Aweel then, joy be wi' ye. But if he rues his bargain afore next Tuesday week, ye hae juist to step ower to the Green Lane and tell auld Robert Cossar. We are like hung mutton, ye ken; the aulder the tenderer!"

They went slowly home, parting at the door of 109. But as Hubert went to bed that night in his room at the yard, he remarked with vexation that he had lost his little pocket-case of medicines, hypodermic and otherwise.

And in the early hours of the morning at 107, Bourne Street, Mrs. Joseph Challoner died suddenly, from the effects, as reported by her panic-stricken husband, of an overdose of chloral. She had not been sleeping well, and Dr. Budden would remember he had spoken to her about chloral. Dr. Budden did not at first recall the fact, but still it was possible. Chloral, rightly prescribed, was contra-

indicated in such cases as those of Mrs. Challoner, especially when the heart was affected.

"And you attended her up to the day of her death," said Joseph, watching with the haggard eye (of grief) the doctor's face.

"Yes, certainly," said Dr. Budden, "certainly, she has been my patient for many years."

And he undertook to give the usual certificate. It would certainly be very unfortunate and disturbing to undergo all the trouble of a coroner's inquest. Heartily Joseph Challoner agreed. It would be better so. And had not the doctor spoken of going away for his holidays the same day as he had prescribed the chloral.

It was possible—yes, possible. His memory was not so good as it was once.

And so one week before the marriage of Hubert and Edith, exact to a day, Mrs. Jo Challoner lay in a retired spot in the Thorsby cemetery, equally free from pain of body and vexation of spirit.

But as for her husband, he went about "looking like death." The neighbours did not think he had so much heart. And in the back of his head certain works clicked on like a big watch ticking, only slower and more solemn. Always the same words! Always! Always!

CHAPTER XXXI

TRIAL TRIPS OF A CRIMINAL

MR. JOSEPH CHALLONER, widower, 107, Bourne Street, off the Cheviot Road, Thorsby, was a man of many resources and few scruples. He regretted much that he could not charge the original owner of the little pocket-case of hypodermics with the murder of his wife. He even began to grow indignant with Hubert. He was certainly the true culprit. If he had not gone on in that foolish way maundering and spooning, spooning and maundering, temptation would never have been put in his poor, poor Molly's way. Clearly it was Hubert's fault. Being guilty, Hubert ought to be punished. And who so fit an instrument as poor Molly's own bereaved husband.

Now, Thorsby draws down its blinds when "there's a death in the house." And in the biting anxious days between Mrs. Joseph Challoner's death and the funeral, Jo sat by the window, his hands clasping the smooth case he had picked up on the moor. He could not quite make up his mind what to do with it. The best thing, of course, would be to replace it in or near the young doctor's room at the yard. Only there were always people about, and he got no chance. Besides, from what he saw, the marriage was steadily going forward.

Edith and Hubert went out daily, or rather evenly. The young man would wave a laughing goodbye to the out-and-outer on the doorstep—whose fierce, imperious eyes softened infinitely to see his Edith move away at the side of the tall, erect young doctor,

walking so firmly, yet with an elastic swing of her body. He liked also to see Edith grasp her skirts with one hand at the corner of the street, and the young fellow take her umbrella. The out-and-outer "had been there" himself, and he knew that these simple operations, performed with the regularity of artillery practice, were the preliminaries for his Edith taking Hubert's arm as they turned sharp out of Bourne Street towards Farne Height by the Old Berwick Road.

Neither of them, nor even the out-and-outer, saw that grey, drawn face behind the blind, the gimlet eyes peering out after them, the pearly grey moisture rubbed away from the colourless brow on which it gathered and gathered, on the little leather case, which Hubert had lost on the moor, turning and turning, in the nervous fingers, implacably like the stars in their course.

"It has got to be put back," muttered Jo, "got to be." He was referring to the marriage of Hubert and Edith. And being a man of "engine," which is to say, ingenuity, quite a number of things came to pass. It must be allowed that Joseph Challoner's executive ability in the path of crime was by no means equal to his facility in planning it. Still, among so many, one would surely not miscarry.

Early on Monday morning, therefore, as Hubert was walking hastily through the fitting-shops, a piece of rivet, such as is used for the heaviest armour of *H.M.S. Horrescent*, fell from the controlling cabin of the travelling crane. It cut through the brim of the doctor's hat, tore his coat at the back, and embedded itself in the trampled grime of iron scalings which formed the shop floor.

It was a failure. Jo Challoner had not allowed for the speed of foot of the young doctor on his way to the out-and-outer to get his morning's message from Edith. The news took the shape of a letter which the parental accomplice conveyed to

the lover, wrapped in a spare railway delivery sheet of a yellow colour.

Hubert wondered, but the out-and-outer, after inquiry, proved that it must have been a stupid accident. His neighbour and tenant, Jo Challoner, was in the "cab" at the time. As for the rivet, engineers often kept such things about to use as levers.

The same evening a pencil of dynamite exploded in the surgery doorway, over which Mr. Egerton had ordered a large brass plate to be affixed, bearing the name and style of "Dr. Hubert Salveson, Resident Surgeon."

Part of the yard wall opposite was blown down, clean as a house of cards; but, strangely enough, the door of the surgery was not even lifted off its hinges. On the other hand, a coal brig, lying far out at the end of the slip, was heaved clean out of the water, and sank with four hundred tons of best Upper Dene coal in her hold, not only a great loss in itself, but an obstruction to navigation for many weeks. The dynamite seemed to have acted like a ball on a billiard table knocked about by an inexperienced player. For instance, the windows of St. Aldegonda's Rest House were blown in, and Miss Fly sent flat on her back, just as she was about to pour herself out an invigorating glass of the richest boarder's port, thus spoiling the whole front breadth of her best black satin dress.

And the weathercock on the Presbyterian kirk in Kingdom Come Lane was a weathercock no more. For, come Easter "haar" or Westland breeze, he remained from that moment with his beak down and his tail to the zenith, a fixed feature in the landscape.

Hubert, two yards behind the surgery door, was filling a test-tube carefully, when he heard a sound like a muffled cough, followed the next moment by rolling echoes, repeated and repeated across and

across the river, and as it seemed increasing as they went farther off.

"Thunder!" he thought; "I thought so this morning!" And he went on pouring, taking himself for a weather-prophet.

Jo escaped again, but he was not satisfied; especially when he heard that, owing to the sunk brig in the fairway of his slip, there would be no more work there in the meantime. Still more discontented was he, when Hubert crossed him, in wild chase, a camera under his arm, to secure good plates of the damages (he had made sure that no one was hurt).

"Hallo, Challoner," he cried, "it wasn't thunder after all—an explosion, by jove! I say, catch hold of these camera legs, will you? I can't run with them and carry the body too. One of them trails!"

On the strength of his recent "affliction," Jo Challoner got a job in the cook-house—the foreman's cook-house, where he chummed with Tom Hedderidge, the cook, a pitiful man, with a taste for beer. Stooping over a fire, and "doing" other folk's meat is, at best, a thirsty occupation. Thirst is quenched by beer. Beer tasted to Tom Hedderidge best out of a cool cellar. As cook to the "chiefs," he had a key for the small door in Old Quay Lane in order to do his marketing. This, however, was also useful for giving access to the "Hen and Chickens" at the corner of the Station Road.

So in the cook-house, at certain (and also uncertain) hours Jo Challoner found himself alone. It was now but three days to the wedding day, and things began to look desperate. Hubert had been traced once to the Registrar. The notices were out. Frequently also he had been to see Mr. Marchbanks in his manse, and had come away smiling. Jo knew this, and emptied carefully a paper of finely triturated powder into the "hot-pot,"

or Irish stew, which was humming in the saucepan for "ta young docter's denner."

It chanced, however, that at that moment the cook-house door was opened. Jo was stirring vigorously with one hand, and reaching out the paper to the flames with the other. Mr. James Pritchard entered. He looked about him suspiciously, eyed Joseph Challoner at the range.

"What the devil are you doing there?" he cried; "where's Hedderidge?" Tremblingly Jo enlightened him on both subjects, but the fierce, bristly autocrat eyed him with glinting suspicion.

"Gone out marketing for my dinner—a pretty time for that—nearly six, and my dinner to be ready in a quarter of an hour. At the 'Hen and Chickens' more like. I'll run the fellow out. But what's this—what's this? The doctor's dinner. Far too much—far too much. A medical man ought to know enough not to stuff.

"Here, where's that bowl-bread? Thank you. I'll pour it myself; stand out of my way. D'ye think this is the first time——"

It was the last.

At 8 p.m. the *Thorsby North Times* of the same evening, published an extra special containing the following brief notice:

Sudden Death of Mr. James Pritchard.

"Thorsby's greatest citizen died suddenly this evening in his own yard, apparently from the effects of poison. Mr. Pritchard, as is well known, was in the habit of remaining late in his office, after the men of the day-shift had retired. On these occasions, retaining the habits of dignified simplicity which distinguished his whole life, he had his meals brought from the cook-house. Mr. Pritchard had gone there, it is presumed, to order his dinner, and on coming out again it was observed that he appeared to be walking more slowly than usual. At

the foot of the ladder which led to his famous observatory bureau he attempted in vain to raise his foot to the first step. A shudder seemed to run through him, and he fell with his face to the ground, his temple striking the sharp iron corner of the ladder and inflicting a severe wound.

"Dr. Hubert Salveson, resident surgeon, together with the well-known local physician, Dr. Budden, were prodigal of their attentions, and did all that could be done; but the stricken gentleman gradually sank, never indeed regaining consciousness. He died at 7.19 p.m., without any of his family having had time to arrive upon the scene. The causes of death are yet unknown."

Neither Hubert nor Dr. Budden being able to certify the cause of death, it was necessary, in spite of some opposition from the family, that a post-mortem examination should take place. It was arranged that the local men should act as assistants to the world-famous talent of Professor Sir Clifford Maxwellton, of the Victoria University, and Mr. Lysaght Witherspoon, chief house-surgeon at St. Peter's Hospital, lecturer at King's.

At the inquest the fact of death by poisoning with the little-known drug "atromorphine," hitherto chiefly known as a hypodermic, was clearly established. But as no evidence could be obtained as to how the poison came to be where it was, and as the police were understood to be primed with all the facts, the jury returned an open verdict, "That the deceased, Mr. James Pritchard, had come to his death by poison, either self-administered, taken by accident, at the hands of a person (or persons) unknown, or by the visitation of God."

An open verdict indeed!

CHAPTER XXXII

THE FETTERS OF MARRIAGE

THE little marriage group emerged from the severe portal of the Presbyterian kirk of Thorsby. Hubert, very proud, with a still look of satisfaction in his eyes, had Edith on his arm. She wore white and a bridal veil. Hubert and she had arranged quite otherwise. In this, as in other things, they desired to be simple; but quite unexpectedly the out-and-outer had proved intractable. This was his affair. Hubert had no right to interfere. If he paid for her clothing afterwards, that was all that would be expected of him—all he had a right to say a word upon.

So Edith had her bridal dress and bridal veil, and was secretly glad. Will Dillingham even went all the way to East Dene, to Aldbridge & Peabody's, to get a wreath of orangle-blossoms—not a very big wreath, but still one for which he paid himself, and of which he was as proud as of a new sweetheart. They drove back quietly, and Bourne Street, at its several doors, received Edith with mingled joy and jealousy. The dinner was the ordinary Sunday's one, but threatened to be less well cooked; for on this occasion both Edith and her mother had been at church. Edith, however, soon doffed her robe, threw her blue flannel gown upon her, and made the omelette. She also set the table and arranged the flowers, the orange-blossom in the centre. Hubert talked quietly with the out-and-outer in the front parlour. Through the window they could hear the hum of a summer afternoon in Bourne Street,

children playing, the ring of a hoop on the kerb, the footfall of a quite distant passer-by. It was almost like the country, save for the murky, sultry air.

Then at Edith's summons they went into the kitchen, and the gladness of Edith's eyes received him. Hubert has never been sure whether he ate anything that day or not. But that he drank of the out-and-outer's favourite stone ale he is certain. They pledged the new household in that, and afterwards also the old.

In the afternoon they walked out upon Farne Height, and Hubert and Edith looked with strange eyes at the little farmhouse of Cheasely in the hollow, at the wriggling white pathway where she had taken him to task for his idleness, and where she had bidden him never to see her again.

Yet somehow, spite of all, over the day there hung a cloud. A heaviness was in the air and on their hearts. Perhaps (thought Edith) because they were so happy, and all that they had wished for had come to pass. The death of the little hard, grey, kindly master of the Pritchard's yard, thought the men. There might be changes now, when the rough autocratic tongue was stilled; and from the Crow's Nest the telescope searched no more from one end of the yard to the other to discover well-doing and ill-doing.

Yet the yard must go on, and it could not be quite that. If there was not work in one place, there would be in another. Thus counselled the out-and-outer. Mrs. Dillingham did not know whatever she was going to do without Edith—her Edith. And so she knew it was that and nothing else. Will wished he had not asked for a whole holiday. It was stupid messing up there with all one's family, and these two spooning to make you sick! Sue was the only one perfectly happy. She chased the sparrows and tried to catch the stray rabbits with her hands. Then, with tired limbs and mind at peace, she lay

down and stared at the sky. She was Miss Dillingham now, and she had worn a "long" dress before Agnes Anne Jacox. Ha! ha! ha! She had been a bridesmaid! Ha! ha! ha! There's for you!

In the meanwhile there was to be no wedding-trip. Edith and Hubert had arranged that. To the little house, so beautifully fitted, down at Thorsby Old Quay—that would be trip enough, and they would take it together. All was ready for them there; and in the afternoon, as soon as she could, Mrs. Dillingham took the tram at the foot of the street, and departed with Sue to make the final preparations for the great home-coming.

Will slipped out by the back door, and was seen no more. He was not going to let a fine new rig like that—shirt, collar, cuffs, half-guinea bowler, and patent leather shoes, black coat and waistcoat, and grey trousers: all the latest things from Windygate's—rust for want of showing off. And he had as many as a dozen calls to make upon his "gals," past, present, and to come. Poor things; it would be a treat to them!

"Will—Will! Confound that boy. Will!" It was the voice of the out-and-outer. But Master Will was safe through the back door. He cowered close to the brick wall of the lane till he was going almost on all fours. Then he scooted. In short, Mr. Will Dillingham was not. He had had enough of weddings. Girls were all very well, and Edith was a good sort. But to be expected to waste a day at your sister's marriage. Ugh! he preferred a funeral—bands and Oddfellows walking.

So it came to pass that in the eventide the remaining three walked down together, skirting the glue-factory, and passing under the long wall of the yard as quietly as if they were coming back to Bourne Street in an hour. The sunset was reddening with smoky ruby the long trough of the Tor estuary as it narrowed inward to the hills. The

blue Cheviots glimmered purple. Topaz and chrysolite glinted up from the smoky amber of the outgoing tide.

There were many who reached a hand to Edith, to wish her God-speed as she took her way for the first time, as Mrs. Hubert Salveson, down the street in which she had dwelt since she was a child. She had not much to say in return, not trusting her voice. But her eyes answered for her, and she promised to come back and see them all. It was not as if she was going far away. Oh, no, she was just as much one of them as ever.

Only one of her acquaintance in Bourne Street had not been seen that day—Mr. Joseph Challoner. Doubtless he was occupied with affairs, or perchance hiding his sallow angers behind his own wrinkled, white window-curtain.

Moreover, Tim Salveson would have come to the wedding, and indeed proposed it. But Hubert wrote to his brother that, for the sake of the peace of all at the Manor House, he was to be content with wishing him luck. And lazy Tim, easily rallying to this advice, looked out a new volume of poetry and settled himself in green entrancing grottos, his body stretched in a long cane chair, his feet mounted on a summer-house table, and his soul in Arcady.

At the corner of the Station Road, before turning down toward the Old Quay House of Thorsby, a figure flitted across from the "Hen and Chickens" and dived into the lane.

"If that ain't Jo Challoner!" cried the out-and-outer. "I'll—— But what in the world could make him run like that?"

"Oh, it couldn't be—at his age," said Edith—"that is, unless his wife's death had put him out of his mind!"

Hubert said nothing. He was occupied in trying to look at Edith, to take her arm, and to carry a

cage of canary birds and two flower-pots all at the same time.

"Oh, there's the house!" cried Edith, stopping suddenly and catching her breath. "I wonder if we have done right; if we will be happy! Oh, Hubert, what do you think?"

"Why, what's the matter?" The girl was crying. Now Hubert was hampered in the matter of comforting owing to his packages.

"Your father——" she said; "it does not seem right."

The out-and-outer laughed, but not joyously.

"Your mother's own daughter," he said. "Never was there anything done, though of your own doing and choosing, but that, when done, you could rake up something to find fault with! But it's late in the day now, my little lass! What tha' hast tied with thy tongue, thy teeth shall not untie."

They climbed the little twisting path laid with white gravel, with white-painted stone posts at the corners, up to the front door. The flagstaff glimmered above, and in front the river spread away. With his latch-key Hubert opened the door of his own house—he had stipulated for this with Sue—and stood aside to let his wife pass in.

But out of the dark of the porch arose crouching figures. A hand was laid on Hubert's shoulder, and a voice said distinctly: "Dr. Salveson, I arrest you in the name of the law for the wilful murder of Mr. James Pritchard. It is my duty to warn you that anything you may say will be used against you!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE CASE FOR THE CROWN

"AND they do say, my dear," said Miss Fly, making their tea in the bare parlour of St. Aldegonda's (in whose windows the fresh putty was not yet hard after the explosion in the yard); "they do say that it's a wonderfully clear case."

"Rubbige!" quoth Mrs. Waddleham, who, on principle, took the rôle of official opposition. "As I sez to my brother Jo, wot is cracked on this affair—he never were very right, him with his troubles and a complexion like Castile soap—'Wot would the young man do sic a thing for? Answer me that,' sez I! An' he couldn't. Not he. 'Wasn't James Pritchard his master?' I asks Jo. 'Didn't he make a good berth for him, where place there was none? Didn't he take a pride in going about with him—aye, more, to my knowledge, than even with Master Egerton or Master Clarence, as is gay, fine young men. An' the house as he had let to the young couple—and all, and all! What had he to gain? He had everything to lose. More like,' sez I to Jo, 'that there's some one has a grudge at him, along o' the stopping the playin' o' the "kip" in the yard. Aye, a deal more like!'

"And Jo, he didn't like it a bit—not a bit. But then, he hasn't no talent for argification, hasn't Jo. He never had, and so he just sniffled and hemmed and hawed, and had nowt to say."

"Ah, but," said Miss Fly, administering an extra lump of sugar to Mrs. Waddleham's cup ("The old wretch would not think twice about taking it, if I

didn't!"), "there has been more things found out. Masella, a wonderful clever detective, has come from Cottonopolis to help, and they've proved things——"

"What things?" demanded Mrs. Waddleham, bristling.

"It's a perfectly clear case," said Miss Fly, repeating herself; "a wonderfully clear case."

"Sayin' so don't make it so," interrupted Mrs. Waddleham; "but let's hear it—all of it!"

"Well, for one thing," said Miss Fly, "they've found out that James Pritchard was poisoned—poisoned with some stuff that only doctors know about, and only the newest of them. 'Altro-something' is its name. And nobody in Thorsby had any except Hubert Salveson. He had brought it from the East Dene Hospital."

"What, a stuff that all them chemists don't have; with all them coloured bottles, green, blue, red, every colour in their windows—garr'on——! Don't tell me!"

"I *am* telling you," said Miss Fly, with dignity; "you asked me. And, what's more, they have found out that the case of those sort of poisons that Hubert Salveson carried in his pocket, wants a bottle of this very stuff. Dr. Budden can prove it was there a week ago. He saw it. So did the head surgeon over at East Dene Hospital. And Hubert can't say how he has used a grain of it. They say that enough has gone to poison a whole parish."

"Goodness gracious—it does give me the creeps!" said Mother Shipton; "and to think o' the number o' times that we have sat in that parlour at the manor, and a *murderer* up to his pranks right over our heads. I'll never drink another cup o' tea there again, if I live to be a hundred!"

Mrs. Waddleham was eyeing Miss Fly.

"Well," she said, critically, "but what does *he* say?"

"He says that he lost it on Green Lane Common, when he walked out there one Saturday with that girl he's married. A likely story! As if he wouldn't have gone back and looked for a thing like that! And, after all, it was found in his own room at the works, with the 'altro-something'—it means sudden death—bottle nearly empty. Now, what do you make of that, Mrs. Waddleham?"

"Wot do I make of it?" cried that lady, unconvinced; "well, I've not heard all yet. Why did he do it? Tell me that."

"Oh, it's all in the papers," cried Miss Fly triumphantly, snatching at a folded sheet, lined and thumbed under the heading of "The Great Thorsby Mystery." "Listen—I'll read it to you!"

"Don't!" commanded Mrs. Waddleham. "Spit it out cheerful. I'll believe you—this time."

"Well," said Miss Fly, swallowing the insult (Mrs. Waddleham was, in her sphere, rich and influential, though "horribly vulgar, my dear"), "it's like this: James Pritchard, so it appears, had gone quite cracked about this young man——"

"Or about the young 'ooman—'*ow are we to know*?" put in Mrs. Skipton, heaving her eyes to the ceiling in a rapt prophetic manner.

"He had made over all the Old Quay property to them," continued Miss Fly; "the three houses and the quay rights—not that these are worth much just now. It appears that he did it to spite his family; and that my Lady Ethelreda went specially to the girl's house to tell her what she thought of her——"

"To make her give up the papers, more likely," put in Mrs. Skipton, with her most Christian martyr air.

"Ho!" said Miss Fly, "I tell this story as this story was told to me; and I give the devil his due——"

"He's about the only one, then!" muttered Mrs. Waddleham between her teeth.

"And I will say that the papers about the house, the will and all that, are in the hands of Mr. Pritchard's own lawyer—all proper and correct."

"They say that they'll break the will, on account o' the murder. The girl must have known——" said Mother Shipton.

"Indeed, I wouldn't put her past it," continued Miss Fly. "Many's the times I have met her and turned away——"

"Surely you didn't owe *her* anything!" said Mrs. Waddleham nastily.

"And," cried Miss Fly, heedless of taunts, and dominating the assembly with her peroration (she had kept her climax for its proper place), "the Old Quay may be worth mints any day. And the whole thing was to go to Edith Dillingham on condition that she married Hubert Salveson—she to become possessor on the death of Mr. Pritchard!"

It was certainly strong circumstantial evidence, taken as a whole. But the incredulous Mrs. Waddleham, though staggered, rallied sufficiently to retort: "Upon whose death else? D'ye think it would be yours?"

But even she herself knew this to be weak.

"At any rate," said Miss Fly, "he was arrested on his marriage night—nobody can deny that—with his hand on his wife's arm, at the door of the very house which Mr. Pritchard left to them in his will, as was afterwards found out."

"And the girl too?" inquired Mrs. Skipton anxiously; "they never let *her* go, sure-e-*lie*!"

"Ah! but they did," said Miss Fly. "They took him, being a man; against her they couldn't prove anything."

"Not *yet*!" prophesied Mother Shipton.

"Well, perhaps," said Miss Fly, unwilling to give anybody the benefit of the doubt; "at any rate, sure it is that he is in prison, and she at the Quay House

with her mother during the day, and her father to look after her at night."

"Never—a house earned by mur-r-r-der!" said Mother Shipton, spectrally raising her hands with a kind of waggle; "the police ought to turn her out."

"Says her husband told her to wait for him there," added Miss Fly.

"Her husband!" declaimed Mother Shipton; "and me, Maria Skipton, wife of a Hinspector of Sanitary Tubes, to have drunk tea under his father's——"

"You mean drainpipes," interpreted Mrs. Waddleham unsympathetically; "many's the time wot I've seed your 'usband coming up through the manhole in our lane, *moock* to the eyes!"

At this ribaldry Mother Shipton only raised her nose till it was horizontal, and disdained reply. Such a woman as the Waddleham had no right to an answer—though Mother Shipton couldn't quite break with her, you see, on account of certain little advances, renewed fortnightly, about rent days.

Great is mammon, and in this world doth prevail!

And so the last word in the case of Hubert Salveson was to the defence. Yet, on the whole, the case for the Crown had been very fairly stated by Miss Fly of St. Aldegonda's. The Waddleham presented only an *ex officio* defence.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE NEW MASTER

IN the dead man's study, high in the Crow's Nest, Clarence Pritchard sat alone. He was the eldest son of his father, and especially of his mother. He had been intended to continue the management of the great business, which James Pritchard had built up. He was in all things the opposite of his brother Egerton—a cold, hard, straight-featured young man of the period, clean-shaven, with thin lips, and hair that parted in the middle, waving lightly on either side his ears.

"A De Conquest, if ever there was one." Such was his mother's verdict. From this none dared to dissent. She had kept him greatly under her own wing at Oaklands, being determined that he should fall into no early scrape, but in due time, and with the Pritchard millions, marry into some great county family, and in time become a peer himself.

"His father twice refused to be made a baronet," she said to herself, "Clarence, with his education, shall take a peerage in his own right—the grandson of an earl, he shall marry an earl's daughter, and perhaps, if God is good, I may live to see him an earl himself. Such is my hope!"

She was not a pious woman, but respect for ancestors is in itself a kind of religion.

Clarence, unlike his brother, had never caused her any uneasiness. He was accounted "gay," but it was with the reasoned wildness of a well-advised young man, who knows how greatly a reputation

of dash in the right quarter adds to a man's prestige. But nothing embarrassing, you know, nothing permanent, hampering, nothing unworthy of a De Conquest. Oh, no!

In this Lady Ethelreda was right. Clarence was cold, worldly-wise, determined, and he meant to make Pritchard works only a stepping-stone to the life he coveted—that of which his mother's marriage with his father had somehow unjustly robbed him. So he had kept in touch with the work of the yard, and knew the man to control it, one John Brand Blunt, who had been chief designer for years, and now, if Clarence Pritchard saw aright, was the very man to rule under him, and draw the last sixpence from it, with blood therewith.

Heavily built, square-jawed, shaven to the blue about the gross chin, John Brand Blunt had the light hind-quarters of a bull-dog. He leaped upon his work, whatever it was, irresistibly. And when his eye glinted at yours, stern and impenetrable, level as the blade of a rapier, you felt that if you stood in his way he might also fix himself upon your throat even as the bull-dog might.

So with John Brand Blunt as grand vizier, Clarence Pritchard prepared to enter into his kingdom. There were to be no sudden or sweeping changes. That was agreed. Undesirable or useless men were to be got rid of quietly. Especially—and this was the first thought of Mr. Clarence Pritchard—his brother Egerton. For he had been left equal with his senior in all things, save in the ultimate possession of Oaklands Hall. He must therefore be set aside—got out of the way, you understand, Blunt?

Clarence thought it probable that his pleasures would do this, as it were, automatically—they would keep him supplied with money. But if not—something else must be found. For a start it seemed

important that a prejudice should be created against him in the neighbourhood.

This morning Clarence rang for the office attendant, a newly appointed functionary—indeed no other than Jo Challoner, whose ready civility had been remarked since he had become general handy man about the yard.

"Ask Mr. Blunt to come this way," said Clarence, looking up calmly from a sheaf of papers. In a few minutes footsteps were heard ascending the stairs, and the massive form of Blunt filled the doorway.

"Sit down, Mr. Blunt," said the young man, with his usual impassive manner, "I have sent for you to talk over a few things—not quite as manager, but such as have to do with the general direction of affairs here. You are aware that my father has left my brother an equal share of the profits and of the responsibilities of the undertaking. I do not complain, but it will be impossible for my brother Egerton to be of the slightest use to us here; you know that yourself!"

"He is very popular with the men, sir," said John Brand Blunt.

"So much the worse," said Clarence. "A popular master makes idle men. That is the price of popularity. Fear; fear, Mr. Blunt, and the sharp eye are what are needed in a business such as ours. Otherwise we should be cheated of our last farthing of profit!"

"There is something in what you say"—John Brand Blunt uttered the words slowly—"but that's not quite all; there is such a thing as justice—as inflexible as you like, but justice. That's better than cart-loads of fear! The men feel it."

Mr. Clarence looked at him steadily as if inquiring whether or not this heavy man were not afraid of losing his three thousand pounds a year. But the big man's long, upper lip, grimly stiff, and the wrinkle of concentration between the eyes reminded

him that there was no such designer in England, no such critic of other men's designs, and that if Pritchard's did not want him, the Admiralty would snap him up at a week's notice.

"About that young fellow Salveson," he said, changing the subject as the result of the scrutiny; "what do you think? His guilt seems certain; that is, if one listens to the police. But I confess I don't see the motive. A few thousand pounds willed to a man's wife; what are they to one who might very well have been confidential adviser to my father?"

The manager shifted his position and coughed slightly.

"The lad's innocent, I am sure," he pronounced, "police or no police. But," here he paused a long while, "there's something behind, which has got to be made clear. Were you well acquainted with the late Mr. James Pritchard, may I ask?"

"Why, he was my father!" cried Clarence, wondering if the new manager had suddenly gone mad.

"That," said the border-man, "I know well. What I am asking is if you were particularly acquainted with him during his life?"

"I—I—it is difficult for me to say——" began Clarence, "I don't know what you wish to infer."

"I infer nothing, sir," said John Brand Blunt, "but to put a question: Were you aware, for instance, that the late Mr. James Pritchard, my late master, spent part of nearly every evening in the house which he left to Mrs. Hubert Salveson; that he wrote up his day's diary there, and that he had a special secret contrivance arranged there for the purpose, as I presume, of concealing it?"

Clarence started to his feet.

"If that be so, let us go at once and get possession of it," he cried. "My father's diaries, and very likely much else. It is rank burglary."

"Cannily," said John Brand Blunt, "all in good

time. The house is neither yours nor mine. It has been searched already by the police. Nothing has been found. The words of the will are clear. '*Old Quay House, with all it contains*——'"

"Surely that would not apply to a private diary?" cried Clarence fiercely.

"The words have a plain man's sense," said the new manager grimly; "but as to their legal force, ye can ask your lawyer."

"I must have those books, that is certain!" cried Clarence, dismissing him. "Good night; thank you, Mr. Blunt. Please send up the attendant."

In a moment more Jo Challoner entered. The manager had encountered him on the ladder. He was on the point of asking what he did there, but, recollecting that after all it was not his business, Blunt went off to the modelling-rooms to make several suspected loafers "sit up."

CHAPTER XXXV

FATHER AND FATHER-IN-LAW

SURGEON-GENERAL CHARLES HEATH-COTE SALVESON, C.I.E., had always expected his rebellious son Hubert to come to a bad end. Or at least that he should be compelled to feed swine with husks, while his belly vainly cried for nourishment. He had a grim pleasure in this thought. He owned as much to himself. Still at times, in the intervals of his absorption in the literal and arithmetical interpretation of Daniel and the Revelation, the Surgeon-General was a Bible reader; and, according to his lights, a Christian man.

He contemplated the day when the prodigal would come knocking at his chamber door. He even made some provision for it. And though he had no intention of seeing his son afar off or falling on his neck, he would kill the fatted calf, in the shape of buying him a passage to some distant colony along with the woman he had chosen to make his wife. Then he would give the portion of the disobedient, sold for a mess of pottage, to the elder brother, in good Old Testament style, and again immerse himself in the problems concerning the division of kingdoms and the last things.

But it was by no means the expected son who came to his door. It was—a relative by marriage. One day, like a visitor out of the Unseen ; somewhat indeed as Death himself enters into a house, stern, inevitable, the out-and-outer passed up the short drive to the front door of the Manor House, stepped

past the astonished maid, who demanded his name "to take up."

"He would not know it if you did, my lass," said the out-and-outer, "I will go up myself;" and so forced the outer defences. Aunt Kidson came fluttering out of her parlour, like a drowsy overfed pullet. In vain; the sturdy knuckles were already falling on the sacred door. Hubert had told Edith, Edith had told her father the way. The out-and-outer was a practical man. There was no time to lose.

And so, still fluttering with the effort of saying, "Come in," and exceedingly indignant at the interruption, Surgeon-General Salveson saw an immense man, perfectly unknown to him, plumping down an armful of books on the table before him with the surprising remark: "Do you want your son to be hung for murder?"

As the household had been carefully keeping the matter from Doctor Salveson for thirty-six hours, and were even then in fear of the police coming to make inquiries, they had let the out-and-outer penetrate more easily than he might otherwise have done, to the Chamber Defended.

"Who are you?" asked the surgeon-general, half rising.

"I?" said the out-and-outer, wiping his heated brow with a red-spotted cotton handkerchief, from which even Edith could not wean him. "I?—Why, I am Mrs. Hubert Salveson's father. You, I think, are her father-*in-law*!"

And the two men, recognising through all veils that each was a man, sat down face to face.

"My son accused of murder, do I understand you to say? Impossible!"

The out-and-outer nodded sternly.

"They do not keep you well informed," he said. "Have you not seen the papers?"

"I have not looked at one for ten years and more. But what of my son?"

The out-and-outer explained, ending every paragraph by slapping the big leather-bound books he had deposited on the table as if nailing them there.

"But these will save him—these will save him." He ended by the words: "You see, I hadn't enough head-learning to know what use to make of them; neither me nor my wife. So we decided to come to the man that had. It was my daughter Edith's thought. 'We have got to save Hubert,' I said; 'but how?' 'Go to Hubert's father,' says she. So I started straight away!"

Surgeon-General Salveson stretched out his hand. He seemed once more the distinguished Indian officer of many cholera camps.

"You did well," he said; "call my son Timothy to come in. He is on the garden seat. He has sometimes a long head. And now, we will take counsel together. But, mark you, this is without prejudice. As soon as my son Hubert is righted, we resume our former positions, relationships, and——"

"Right," interrupted the out-and-outer, bluffly; "nothing would please me better." Then the out-and-outer told the story in detail. A woman's habits of restless curiosity, and his daughter's desire to discover something that might help her to get her Hubert back had been the first cause of this discovery.

"She found a locked safe," said Ned Dillingham; "I forced it."

"But," cried Major-General Salveson, a defender of vested rights, "surely that was a dangerous and even unwarrantable proceeding."

"The house, with all that it contained, was left to my daughter on condition that she should marry your son She had married your son, as the books of the register will attest—likewise Mr. Marchbanks of the Presbyterian kirk. I had her instructions.

So with levers and wedges I finally brought the safe to reason—and found these."

"What do they contain?" asked Tim, who, having been bred a lawyer, retained in his body some tincture of the learning he had so unwillingly imbibed and forgotten with such precipitation.

"The private diary of Mr. James Pritchard!" said the outer-and-outer with triumph. Then, fearing that his hearers might not understand such a roundabout way of expressing himself, he added, "Owd Jamie of the Yard, ye know!"

"But such a thing ought to be returned at once to the family!"

"Naw," snorted the out-and-outer, sitting up till his prominent knotted eyebrows seemed to unite with his truculent nose with the blown war-horse nostrils; "naw, they ha' been trying that already. Comed with a right of search, young Clarence did. But I had them books out by the back door afore they came in by the front. So I brought them to you. They will save the lad. I've my daughter to think of; and the books were willed to my Ede!"

"Read, Tim," said his father, waiving the general question. "You are a lawyer, and my eyes are not so good at manuscript as they have been."

"Edith has looked out the pages," said the out-and-outer. "She found out all about it, and would have come herself; only they might not have let her in. I did that for myself. So let none of your folk downstairs be blamed!"

"Read, Tim," said the surgeon-general, mounting his big gold-rimmed prophetical spectacles on his nose and drawing a pencil ready to take notes on a blank sheet of paper.

Tim found the first marked passage and began. James Pritchard's clear early trained hand had never varied, even in his voluminous business communications, and in these journals of his intimate life, which he had written as if for the eye of his

vanished love, sitting in her chair, and looking out on the river as they two had done, the calligraphy was like print.

The marked passages were all in the last volume. Some were, therefore, almost the last things James Pritchard had set his hand to. The journal had been kept from day to day. Jottings had been made in the Crow's Nest on odd pieces of paper, scraps of envelopes, the backs of sketch-plans, of calculations and measurements of all sorts. These were often left, especially in the last fifty pages of the third volume, between the leaves of the tightly bound book, which lay flat enough when opened out, but shut as with a spring upon its contents.

The surgeon-general listened awhile with half-closed eyes. "Masella ought to hear this," he murmured. "I used to know him in India. I nursed him down in Indore once, when he was in the Intelligence Department."

He rose to put his hands on the books which Tim had laid on the table. But the huge paw of the out-and-outer shot forth, and covered the pile.

"Bring your Masella here if you like," he said, grimly; "but these there, are my daughter's. They were entrusted to Ned Dillingham to save his daughter's husband's life, and he is going to do it. They don't go out of his sight till that's put through!"

"Very well then," assented the surgeon-general, "then be good enough to wait here. I will go and fetch him. Tim can keep you company."

And the moment after, the Manor House was in an uproar; subdued, but deep as the sea. Mrs. Kidson fell in a faint. The old domestics leaned against the nearest wall and gaped like new-landed fish. A housemaid had hysterics.

The master was going out! The master had passed down the stairs, put on a winter overcoat, taken an umbrella, donned a tall hat, all three

unused for years, and left all his precious prophetical treasures to the mercy of that wild angry man with the broad beaky nose, who had arrived to disturb the quietest and most studious house in the world.

True, Master Tim was there. But, after all, what of him? Very likely he would go to sleep over a book of poetry, and who would protect them?

So outside the door of the closed study, struggling for a glimpse through the altogether insufficient keyhole, the Manor household swarmed like an ant-hill.

Thus, in fact, their master found them, and, all India rising insurgent within him at the sight, the surgeon-general actually raised his foot in sharp chastisement to the crouching listeners, not even sparing his "near relative," the scarcely recovered Mrs. Kidson. Afterwards, he referred to his anger as "the triumph of the Old Adam within him," and drew many touching lessons therefrom, when he had occasion to preach humility and long-suffering to others. At the time, however, he only grunted and kicked with entire satisfaction to himself, referring all the time to his intention of "clearing the house once and for all of such a crew."

And behind him came a longish solemn person, dressed like a Baptist minister in country parts, who solemnly affirmed at each assault: "Serve 'em right! Serve 'em right!"

This was Masella, the famous detective from Cottonopolis, and thus, Surgeon-General Salveson's hasty action may be said to have had the sanction of law.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE LAST OF OLD QUAY PIER

THE out-and-outer had left Old Quay Cottage at a fortunate time for the life of his son-in-law. But so far as his daughter Edith was concerned it was ill-chosen; indeed, could not have been worse.

The door opened ere she had time to shut the despoiled safe, and Edith, looking round, found herself face to face with Joseph Challoner; but another Jo Challoner from the man she had known in Bourne Street. His eyes were glazed, the whites injected with blood. An unhealthy purple flush covered his toadstool complexion.

"Jo!" said Edith, standing up, to hide if possible the open safe and the tools with which the out-and-outer had opened it.

But, though that was his excuse for being there, Joseph Challoner had no care for James Pritchard's safe, nor for its late contents (though well he might), nor yet for the mission committed to him by his new master, Mr. Clarence Pritchard.

He saw only before him the woman—the girl—the child upon whom his eyes had dwelt with a steadily increasing desire through the years. He hated the father; first, because he had been his benefactor; again, because he was all that he, Joseph Challoner, was not, and could not be. But he had always loved Edith, the daughter; as much, that is, as it was in his nature to love any one. At any rate, he had long marked her for his own.

And now she stood before him, alone and

frightened. He promptly forgot the men waiting for him at the gate. He forgot how, as a friend of the family, he was to obtain possession of these books, by an offer to save Hubert Salveson's life. These diaries must not on any account fall into the hands of the police. Mr. Clarence believed them to be full of dealings with foreign and even hostile powers, of details of vessels built for the enemies of Britain, of escaped privateers and set to prey upon the commerce of friendly nations; facts which, if known, might cause new Alabama Claims, and bring about the ruin of the firm. Therewith, too, which was important, the loss of the peerage which he counted within sight.

"Edith Dillingham!" said Joseph Challoner. It was now hardly a human voice, and somehow made Edith's flesh creep on her bones.

"What do you want, Jo? Is it my father?" asked Edith, faintly keeping her back valiantly to the hole in the wall, to give the out-and-outer time to escape.

"I want you!" said Jo Challoner, still more hoarsely, beginning a kind of stealthy approach to the girl. She looked about for a weapon, but found none.

"I want you, Edith Dillingham," he went on; "your husband, who shall never be your husband, is certain to be hanged—for murder; d'ye hear?"

He was grasping the girl's wrists now. He could now see into the yawning safe, empty save for a few papers. But of that he took no heed.

"D'ye hear?" he repeated.

"I hear, Jo," said Edith, mastering her fear, and speaking as if the whole were no more than a jest; "let my wrists go, Jo; you hurt!"

He let go mechanically; the habit of obedience strong within him, till mastered by madness.

"Hubert is not guilty," she said, "you know that, Jo. Don't you?"

It was the wrong chord. He flung himself towards her. She escaped by a sudden rush to the farther side of the table. She tried the door, furtively keeping her eyes on Jo. It was locked. He had taken the key out as he came in!

"Edith," he cried, bending towards her over the table, while she rested her finger-tips against the opposite side of the round to be ready to dodge either way according as he should come, "listen to me. I have alway loved you, Edith Dillingham. I hated my wife. I always did. Well, she is dead. No need to speak of the dead, is there, Edith? It brings ill-luck!"

She saw his madness plainly now. It glared luridly from his dreadful eyes. She felt it blow in the hot breath which came to her cheek across the narrow table.

"Listen to me," he cried, so hoarsely she could hardly understand his words; "I have done for you all that a man may do for a woman. Yes, everything. I have slain for you; I have murdered for you; and now you shall be mine. I am not going to lose my soul for nothing.

"There are men at the front door," he continued; "come out with me by the back. I have money. We shall escape. Your marriage is yet no marriage. For me, I am free; I will marry you in America, or where you will. I swear it! What else have I lived for, dreamed of, sinned for, all these years. And now to escape me! But you shall *not* escape me!"

Edith managed to get her hand upon the hasp of the front window, the large oriel which looked upon the river. There were men below there, she knew; policemen perhaps. At any rate they would not let her be murdered by a madman. But Jo Challoner was before her. Seeing she was about to escape he took a long grey pencil-shaped object out of his pocket. It was capped with a little brass detonator.

"You see that," he cried, "that is dynamite; the like of what blew down the wall opposite your husband's surgery in the yard. He escaped, but you will not. If you do not consent to come with me quietly, this instant, I swear I will blow both of us up together—you and I. I have lived without you, for all my striving and loving. But I can at least die with you clasped in my arms!"

Edith had got the window open now.

"Help! murder!" The words leapt upon the still air. "If you are men, help me!" she cried.

Joseph Challoner bounded towards her, and caught her in his arms. One hand was over her mouth. The red eyes seemed to fill the whole world. But she did not faint. Both hands were clasped about the wrist of the hand which held the dynamite cartridge. Edith fought for her life.

"Open there! Open, or we will burst it open!"

The closed door gave way at the word, and in the wild whirl that followed she saw a big dark man snatch something out of Jo Challoner's hand and fling it far out of the open window.

Within, the fight continued round the madman, who had other weapons. But Edith fainted quietly away, her last impressions being that the whole sea had risen in a great white heap, that it was flinging itself against the sky, which was falling about her ears with the noise of multitudinous thunderings. Also that there was no Old Quay landing-stage any more.

When she came to herself in the arms of Mrs. Leafy, the captain's wife next door, Jo Challoner was gone. The dark, stern man who had saved her was gone. And so, too, when she looked through the window, was Old Quay Pier and landing-stage.

"He was mad!" she whispered to the captain's wife, "mad; he tried to kill me! Why?"

The captain's wife nodded, and glanced over her shoulder.

"I was bid to give you this," she said.

It was a card of some one whose name was "John Brand Blunt." Neither Mr. nor Esq.; no titles or degrees marred the net effect of that statement.

On the back some words were written in pencil.

"Joseph Challoner is in prison. The safety of the house is assured during your husband's absence.

"J. B. B."

Yet somehow Edith felt that there was a danger in the words. It was no friend who had written them. Being a woman she believed in presentiments.

CHAPTER XXXVII

SEEN THROUGH A GLASS CLEARLY

THESE were the passages from the diary of the late James Pritchard, Esquire, J.P.,D.L., etc., which, duly communciated to the authorities, procured the immediate release of Dr. Hubert Salveson, and in due course thereafter the detention of Mr. Joseph Challoner during Her Majesty's pleasure as a dangerous criminal lunatic.

"*May* 20.—Received my new binocular of power magnifying twenty-five diameters. Have used it all day. Quite satisfied, Doctor H. S. does his work with vigour. Watched him going about preparing report on the by-products. He observes for himself, takes nothing for granted, and will be a valuable man in the yard.

"Afterwards he walked through the sheds with J. B. Blunt. Passing the travelling crane, a large piece of iron fell from the engineer's cab. Immediately afterwards, ex-stevedore Joseph Challoner came down hurriedly. Tomlin, Scotch engineer, busy with his chain-connections at the time. No fault—probably an accident. Dr. H. S. unhurt. Speak with Tomlin.

"*May* 21.—Accidental (?) discharge of a dynamite cartridge, stolen from Old Quay stores under the charge of Captain Leafy. Explosion took place near the surgery door. I saw Challoner again loitering in that direction, had him privately searched in the side-office as he passed to give his time to the time-keeper of gate No. 1. Nothing

suspicious found upon him; but the man will bear watching. He has no bad reputation, though not popular. May only be a little mad. I have put him among the odd job men, and Hedderidge, the cook of the foreman's kitchen, has set him to scrape pots. Same wage in meantime."

(23 *and* 24.—Nothing about Challoner on these days; Mr. Pritchard having a new contract on hand, and afterwards spending some hours in putting Old Quay House into a fit state for June 1. He gives details.)

"*May* 25.—Hear that Challoner's wife is dead. Have sent for a copy of the doctor's certificate. All in order—overdose of chloral, permitted or advised to be taken by Budden. Old fool, Budden. *Mem.* Tell him so at the Board of Guardians on Tuesday.

"*May* 26.—Dr. H. S. operated on a slight abscess at the root of the front tooth which has been annoying me these past three days. Tells me he has lost his pocket case of medicines, and had not had time to get another from Edinburgh. Sent out, however, for some cocaine, which he injected, also alvantunder. Operation quite successful. Asked Dr. H. S. where he had lost case. If in the yard, should be easy matter. Hesitated at first. At last admitted that he had been for a walk on the moor towards Green Lane with his sweetheart. Lost it there. Very natural; but less chance of recovering it. Caused a notice and reward to be circulated, on the chance.

"*May* 28.—Came early to the yard this morning, arriving at six; found all at their duties. Egerton helping Doctor S., with a bad burn case in the auto-shed. Saw Joseph Challoner enter surgery, and lay a black morocco case on mantelpiece, the window being open at the time. I went down afterwards, and found it was the missing article described by Dr. S. Will go into the matter as soon as the Government Inspector leaves, which will be about

five. Shall be too busy till then. Made my own breakfast here in Old Quay Cottage, for perhaps the last time—before Hubert and his wife arrive. Have also written this up to date. I intend these journals ultimately for Mr. Salveson and his wife. They may in some sort help me to live over again my early days in this cottage."

These were the last words. The rest was blank paper.

For when, at five o'clock, the Government expert being gone, James Pritchard strolled across to the cook-house, and there partook of the Black Dinner prepared for another man, he was quite unaware that, in his register of accurate observations upon the doings of his *personnelle*, he had left more than enough to hang the author of his death, had the man's madness not been self-evident.

It was considered probable also, after the amount of atromorphine used in the case of Mr. Pritchard had been ascertained, that Jo Challoner might also, with justice, have been indicted for the murder of his wife. But being indubitably insane, he was condemned for life to the prison for criminal lunatics, and no good end would have been served even in the case of his conviction. So poor Molly, who had heard the clear Corwen bells ring down the Welsh valley, was left now to sleep peacefully under-sod, the steam whistles of the yard engines, and the hooting syrens of the river boats sounding her appropriate lullaby.

At Old Quay Cottage Edith stayed on, much perplexed in mind. Her mother was with her often. But Mrs. Dillingham took constitutionally a sad view of things. Somehow she had been certain that this could not turn out well from the first. At the sight of Hubert (it now appeared) she had "had a turn." She had always wished that Edith had minded her mother, and married Alf Hazel.

But nowadays girls cared nothing for their mother's advice. In her young days it was different.

All which was, of course, most timely and comforting. And but for the fact that, for many years, Edith had been accustomed to do her work to the steady dropping of similar discouraging observations, she might now have felt it more.

Sue looked in also at Old Quay, made the house a turmoil for ten minutes, looked out of every window, hailed the passing steamers, clattered up and down all the stairs, and then vanished with a final banging of doors. Upon which Edith put her hands to her head, and at the gesture, her mother reproached her with a lack of gaiety. Sue was always light-hearted, always happy at home. Let her be the same. Why should she, Edith Salveson, sit there and mope? Was the cottage not her own, her very own? Even if . . . things happened . . . she could always take boarders. There was that nice man, the manager of the yard, who was always sending flowers. Mrs. Dillingham was sure, from the look of him, that he would be quite glad to come. Edith must really look on the bright side of things."

"Oh, mother, don't!" cried Edith at last, in a kind of frenzy. And when Mrs. Dillingham ceased monologuing from sheer astonishment at her daughter's outbreak, Edith rose, and went out to the little green seat by the flagstaff. Mrs. Dillingham, being left alone, continued to shake her head at intervals, and to mutter to herself with ever-increasing conviction. "They werena like that i' my young days, the lasses; no, not i' my young days."

Setting herself out on the river front under a deep-brimmed straw hat she had snatched up in passing, Edith began by shedding a few quiet tears. As indeed what right-minded girl would not.

There was her husband, who had never been a

husband, in prison. There was the home she had been so proud of, still *not* a home, because he was not there. She knew, of course, that he was innocent. But, like all in Thorsby, she had a great fear of the law. In youth the law had meant to Edith a big, fierce, blue-clad policeman, who would not let little tired girls sit on the park grass, and chivied boys from shy games of cricket at street corners. The law ran inoffensive out-of-works or feeble tramps along the street, in the direction of the police-station, shaking them as they went.

And in the grasp of this great Policeman Law, Edith pictured her Hubert. She shuddered, and was turning away to reach her room unobserved, when over the green hedge came a hearty voice: "Mrs. Salveson, Mrs. Salveson; won't you come into our little playground a bit? I think the missus would much like to show you her roses."

It was Captain Leafy who spoke, that old fighter and runner of blockades in the dangerous touch-and-go days of James Pritchard's ventures.

Captain Leafy was hardly of the popular buccaneer type, being rather spare, undersized, with chiselled features, a broad white brow, and tightly compressed lips. His well-trimmed grey beard was pointed a little forward, navy fashion, and he had a blue eye so deep and clear that it seemed a bit stolen from one of those tropic skies he had sailed under so long.

Edith moved through the green sparred gate which he held obligingly open for her. He took his hat off to her as she passed with a certain air which told the girl, inexperienced as she was, that Captain Leafy had in his day welcomed on board his ship some very exalted passengers indeed.

Edith had made acquaintance with Mrs. Leafy already, an apple-dumpling woman, who had waited long for the captain, waited past her prime, "till so be as he could be with her all the time, and not

leave her in peril of her life with a brood o' childer to bring up by hand." But, as she added, "the captain as he stood, was bairn eneuch for any one able-bodied woman."

They were both kind people, and the tea they gave Edith did her good. Also the conversation of the captain and the chiming agreement of his wife. There was never anything so absurd as Hubert's arrest. Why should he kill poor old James Pritchard, who had done him so much good, and was ready, to all appearance, to do him so much more? The police were doing their duty, or they thought so. But, lord, he (Captain Leafy) knew policemen. All over the world they were the same. They were mostly fairly honest men, only deadly stupid. Never room for more than one idea at a time under a policeman's helmet, and that one was usually how to get as many convictions as possible.

Prisons: he had been in them as often as there were quills upon the fretful porcupine—Spanish ones like Pilate's House at Tarragona, in the Red Dungeon at Alicante, at La Bèche on the French shore, in China—a most evil place, China, to get sent to prison in. He had seen them at Canton picking out every tenth man, tried or untried, to be taken out to the execution-ground; and he the ninth and not sure of the count. The mental arithmetic he had learned at school, was, he averred, of little service to him. He made himself number ten every time, and when he didn't, he was afraid the mandarin would!

Thus he rattled on. And the conclusion of the whole matter was always: "After all, here I am, not very much the worse, a bit carved here and there maybe, but sound in the main, taking tea in Anchorage Cottage down by Thorsby Old Quay in company with my good wife Sarah!"

Then he had to rise to salute Mrs. Leafy on the

cheek, reciting *apropos* of nothing save the villanous rhyme and his own mad humour:

> "I thought, as I looked on the wild Nia-gara,
> If they only could see my tempestuous Sarah!"

Mrs. Leafy ordered him not to make a donkey of himself generally, and in particular to sit down and take his tea like a Christian "when it was hot." But before he could obey they heard a crash behind them. Some one, much pressed for time, vaulted the privet hedge, strode towards them, and caught Edith in two strong arms.

"Bless me, bless me, what's this?" cried the captain, though he knew.

"I have come to take my wife home!" cried Hubert radiantly.

"Well, you needn't have come down like a hippopotamus in the middle of my early strawberry bed," said the captain; "the next time you get out of prison, please notice that there is a gate."

But Hubert and Edith cared just as little for his grumbles as the excellent man meant them.

"It's all right!" said he.

"Of course!" she said; "but—oh, Hubert!"

And so they went out together, through the gate this time.

"Bless them," repeated Captain Leafy, "I knew all the time he was coming. Master Egerton told me. That's why I got her over here away from her mother, who would have spoilt it. As for the boy, he's quite welcome (once in a way) to walk over every strawberry bed I have in the garden."

"She looked frighted, poor thing," said his wife thoughtfully.

"Did she?" said the captain, crunching up all that was left of the toast, with apparent enjoyment, "she'll get over that bravely enough, never fear."

"Well, I'm sorry for the poor young things,

beginning so foolishly on nothing," said Mrs. Leafy, who was a woman of pronounced views.

"Ne'er you fash your head about the foolish young things, Sarah, my lass," said the captain, with his mouth full; "if you had been a wiser woman, you would have been seeing some of your own lasses carried off like that, without the young man that took them ever stopping to say so much as a thank'ee!"

"Oh, for shame, Abe," cried his wife; "you know very well that I couldn't leave my father."

"Then, Sarah," said her husband, getting up (the toast having disappeared), "you are the poorer judge of those that can!"

"Maybe," said his wife softly, her eyes on the windows of the house that now was Hubert and Edith's. Then, being left alone, she sighed again, wistfully, pensively—the sigh of the childless wife.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE SACREDNESS OF L. S. D.

"IT was rather well arranged—yes," said Egerton Pritchard five minutes after Hubert had brought in his wife. These two had lingered a little by the way.

For to pass the time the out-and-outer had made some improvements in the back garden. These included a rockery and a pretty new trellis-work summer-house, with a view of the river and of nothing else.

But these improvements inspected to the satisfaction of both they went indoors, to find, in addition to the out-and-outer and her mother, Mr. John Brand Blunt, and no less a person than Mr. Egerton Pritchard himself. Naturally he was doing the talking.

"Oh, it was neat—neat—ra-thér. I arranged it. As soon as Blunt there got the order for release, 'immediate release, and be quick about it,' I had my '*teuf*'—auto, you know—brought round, and I tell you I made the pavement sizzle all the way to the prison door. I saw Clarence, that's my brother, on the way, and he hailed. I told him where I was going, and he said that it would look bad. I told him that if he knew anything that would look better than going to help clear an innocent man, I was on to it. But he cleared without a word—sulky devil, Clarence; death on side; always was! Thinks he'll run the yard; but he won't. I know more about it than he does eh, Blunt? But I'll let him think that he does

for a while. Let him play Big Pot as much as he wants. But we will run the little gadgets that make the old lady steam ahead. Let him show the customers round, but you'll put me up to talking the cold business, eh, Blunt?"

"That's it!" said Blunt; but without meeting the young man's eye.

"Now I am talking nonsense—or going to do it," continued Egerton; "besides, you, Salveson, don't want a pack of fellows in your house after all you've been through. I know that. I suppose you would like a few days off at the yard."

"I have been too long off," said Hubert, happily conscious of the Day-of-Rest between. "I shall be in my surgery on Monday as usual, I hope."

They took their leave, and as they went down the walk Egerton said aloud: "Deuced pretty girl that! Lucky fellow, young Hu Salveson! I say, is that the girl you've been lugging flowers to, all along the Cheviot Road, every day for a week?"

"It is," said Blunt, gnawing at his moustache.

Mr. Egerton laughed. "You had better look out!" he said; "you'll be falling in love! Now, that's funny; fancy old Blunt in love!"

"Yes, fancy!" growled John Brand Blunt, turning a hostile shoulder and a face so lowering and fierce as to be almost terrible; "fancy your taking me for a sweep!"

Then the creamy Mercèdes went up the lane, like the fast 'un passing Green Lane station under a full head of steam, while the urchins loitering about the station corner shouted: "Oo-roo! Go it, Edgie!"

. . . . .

Soon after that the out-and-outer followed up the lane with his wife on his arm, and in their own house Hubert and his wife sat down to take their first meal together.

"Please, Hubert, don't tell me anything at all about it just now. Let it be for to-night as if it had never been. Do you understand?"

He understood and, rising, kissed the little topmost curl of her hair.

"Oh, don't," she said quickly; "don't pet me or I shall cry! And I don't want to cry—now!"

Then she looked carefully at him and was all maternal again, which was best for her. He was whiter, thinner; or, at least, so she imagined.

"Poor boy!" she said, reaching out a hand to touch his; "were they very cruel to you?"

Daily floggings and the rack were the least of the sufferings indicated by her tone.

"On the contrary, they were excessively kind to me," smiled Hubert, "oh, you lovely——"

"Husssh!" said Edith, regarding him from the other side of the table with large, lustrous, humid eyes, "sit still and eat your muffin!"

And to show him just how to do it, she rose and circled the table with a rush of a singularly tumultuous character, which interrupted the muffin on its way to Hubert's mouth, replaced it, and thereafter disturbed the symmetry of the tea-table, a thing upon which Edith prided herself.

Recovering a little, though not yet taken with a sense of shame for her misdeeds, she began cautiously to feel his head and arms, to make sure that no permanent injuries had been received by being broken on the wheel, or the other tortures which he had undergone.

Certainly she could not discover any, and no one but herself would have suspected hidden injury, to judge by the strength of the arms that encircled her. Edith promptly forgot all about the tea, muffins, hot cakes, short cakes, which she had laid out with such care.

When she emerged it was only to jump up suddenly, and cry: "Oh, Hubert, come and see how

nice I have made the house. I have been just dying to show it you."

This might have been true—doubtless was, because Edith said it. But it was certainly a slow dissolution. Nevertheless, because Edith took him by the hand and pulled him, Hubert rose with a sigh. To his idea the house could very well have waited. He let his napkin drop on the floor, an offence observed by Edith, who, however, resolved to say nothing that day, but to begin to train him to-morrow. Oh, that would be sweet!

During Hubert's absence his little wife had not been idle. Dared he say so? Everything was in position. Order reigned in Warsaw. Look at this deep cupboard! She opened the double doors wide. They were the work of vanished hands, but, such is lovers' ingratitude, neither of them thought of James Pritchard at that moment. Nor indeed would James Pritchard have wished them to, could he have used his telescope from some celestial Crow's Nest.

"See," she cried, happily sinking her arms, which the loose gown left bare to the elbow, in the piles of cool, lavender-scented linen, "that's all ours—ours—ours!"

Hubert but vaguely understood the passion and respect which some women (and they of the best) cherish for household linen. But all the same he had to feel and admire.

"That's not the way, silly; this way, between your finger and thumb! And look at the fineness," cried Edith. "This is old; it was part of mother's when she got married, was spun far away in Scotland by her mother——"

"It would make rare bandages for dressings——"

"Oh, Hubert, mother's old linen sheets—if ever you dare!"

But apparently the young man took fright at the storm aroused by his words, for he apologised in

a way exceedingly agreeable to him, which would have added immensely to the knowledge of Mistress Sue and the discomfiture of Agnes Anne Jacox, had the first-named young person been there to see.

Then the chairs, the tables, his own study left for his surgical "things." She alone was to dust that. No one else should touch it!

"Well," said Hubert, "and pray how many servants have you engaged to dust the other apartments?"

Upon which she asserted, falsely, that he was teasing her, and threatened a second time to cry if he went on; indeed, showed symptoms of doing so. Whereupon Hubert created a diversion by demanding the prices of the various articles bought since his incarceration, and where she had got them. In a moment Edith was all herself again. She had been reared on prices, and finding things too dear or too cheap. Too cheap would not wear; too dear could not be bought. But she was an excellent judge of the golden mean; or rather of the silver and copper mean. For till she paid the upholsterer, with little awful flutterings and quakings of the heart, she had never in her life parted with a gold piece all at once without getting any change back for it. She was shocked, indeed, when the cabinet-maker clinked the pieces into his drawer one by one, for all the world as if they had been nothing better than sixpences.

So finger on lip, poised with her pretty shoulder outlined against the window curtain—not of straight folds of white muslin as at 109—Edith resolved herself straightway into a finance committee, and explained how she had spent her money and his. She ended with a race to the lately fractured but now repaired safe, and from behind the ponderous doors she produced the remainder of her store: "Sixteen pounds, eleven shillings, no-pence, and

the coal bill settled up to yesterday. All the tradesmen, of course, I pay cash, for the sake of the discount."

Meanwhile the June twilight was coming slowly on. The "brool" of the yard came faintly to their ears, like the spinning of a big top. It was the hour for sentiment.

Edith expressed how much of that was in her mind by asking abruptly if Mr. Blunt had given Hubert his wages for the two weeks he had been away.

Hubert stood aghast. He had never thought of that. He jested, which was an entirely wrong line to take. Ever since Edith could remember the Saturday's wage had been sacred. Ned Dillingham brought it straight home, and with a hearty, "There, Emm!" he placed the whole in his wife's hand. She never thanked him. It was her right. She only slowly separated the coins, picked out the traditional two shillings and sixpence for his pocket money, and laid that in his hand.

The out-and-outer said, "Thank ye," heartily, because that was of his wife's goodness, and stumped off to strip and wash himself to the waist, while his wife locked away the precious running-grist of the family mill in a drawer, of which she kept the key in a place supposed to be known only to herself.

For years Edith had looked forward secretly to doing the same. Even as a girl at school she had bought the account books she meant to keep when she was married. She knew she was going to be married; why, of course. She had tried entries on spare leaves of cash-ruled paper. This chiefly for pride-of-state, of course; for it was not likely that she would ever buy anything the price of which she could not remember to all eternity. So, with such a married wife, small wonder that Hubert

made a mistake when he treated lightly the three times sacred subject of the Weekly Pay.

Edith reproved him, and he was penitent. He would see about it on Monday.

"The first thing!" she pursued determinedly.

"But I didn't work for it!" said Hubert weakly.

"That doesn't matter—you were in their employment. They never dismissed you. You will go the first thing, mind!"

Hubert promised. Had she told him to go and ask the Prime Minister for the vacant Garter he would have promised equally.

This settled, Edith's sternness fell suddenly. She found a shawl, and Hubert her hat, the one he had surnamed the "Green Lane Toque," because he had first learned the name of it on that famous and memorable day. He considered it more suitable for summer-house wear than the ordinary broad-brimmed article. He was an authority, having given his attention to the subject.

"See," said Edith, lifting the lid of a stained white-wood hat-stand in the miniature lobby, "this is for your caps, throat-kerchiefs, and brushes—one for your tall hat (that's the soft one), and one for your clothes brush. And you are not to keep them anywhere else. Oh, and you mustn't let your dress hat stay like that, getting all the dust and smuts. And, oh, Hubert, don't you know any better than to rest it on the rim? On the top always! That keeps it from ruffling. Now, you understand?"

"Yes, dear!" said Hubert, smiling, "I understand—now. But you mustn't expect to get me perfect all at once. You see, I've never been used to have any one tell me to do anything, or to do it when told."

"Oh," said Edith cheerfully, "I'll tell you fast enough, and see that you do it, too. It will be a pleasure to me!"

And in the enthusiasm of the moment Hubert vowed that it would also be a pleasure to him.

As they reached the summer-house and ensconced themselves already the twilight lay grey-mauve across the wide Tor estuary. The incoming tide lappered pleasantly about the stark posts in the Old Quay, and in the distance the lights of East Dene began to string themselves out.

Among the earliest was a big blur high up away to the right, evidently not a mill. On Saturday all the mills would be closed. Edith pointed it out, and asked what it might be.

"The hospital on Spenny Dene Height," said Hubert, "where once I was a house surgeon."

"Sure you never were in love with any of the pretty nurses? They are pretty, aren't they? Will says so. He was there once with his knee."

"Oh, so-so," said Hubert cautiously.

"You are sure?" Edith demanded. She was not to be put off. She had heard about young doctors.

"Oh, yes, sure," said Hubert, "one or two were quite pretty."

"No, sure that you did not fall in love with them?"

"Oh, no, not as a body!" he drolled.

"Oh, tell me," cried Edith, "don't laugh; I am in earnest. You don't love them better than me—any of them? Some of them are ladies. I know, because I went to an ambulance class which one of them taught. She was a lord's daughter."

Hubert did not love the East Dene nurses better than his little Edith, collectively or individually, lord's daughter or churl's daughter. He had never loved anybody all his life, except the little girl he had helped carry her baby sister to Green Lane station. This was accepted as a satisfactory statement of the case.

"Blessed Green Lane station!" murmured Edith, in a voice soft as the cooing of a dove.

"Blessed Green Lane station indeed!" repeated Hubert, thankful for the diversion.

Presently Edith gave a little shiver.

"Dear, you are cold. The dew is coming down. Let us go in."

And drawing her shawl about her, her eyes vague and mystic in a dream of the years and the years and yet again the years, Edith rose and followed her husband into the house.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE WATERS OF SILOA THAT FLOW SOFTLY

NEVER day so perfect as that Sunday when, breakfasting late, they two sat for the first time under their own vine and fig-tree—or, at least, hop-vine and white lilac tree. Hubert had brought out a little table of wicker of his own, one of his few domestic possessions, bought off a gipsy's travelling van, stained with acids and reagents, concealed from sight, however, when covered with what Edith called a "square." This was a small table-cloth of unknown provenance and material, but agreeable enough to the eye, with its green and gold pattern and twisted fringes; agreeable also to Edith's house-wise heart, because she had got it a bargain for three-and-eleven.

Then Hubert fetched out journals, both medical and general, magazines, books in stacks and piles. Edith had some work of necessity and mercy which concerned Hubert's outfit for the morrow; this ostensibly to comfort her Presbyterian conscience, but really because she must, on that day of all days, find her fingers something to do.

Thus they were to be fully occupied, douce and sage, with the dignity of old married people.

But the day and the air took hold on them directly. Along the river the breeze was always cool and sweet, the Tor estuary being like a pair of lungs to draw up the salt from the sea, and the heather breaths down from the uplands, even from as far as the blue Cheviots.

Yet to keep them aware of themselves, time and

again wafts of the yard would come across their faces, warm and close, blown whiffs of steam like those about Green Lane as the fast 'un went by. The travelling "smut," too, fell; though but rarely, because of the riverside air-currents, and in the little summerhouse, never. Again, travelling by some "carry" or over-current of wind, smells of the tarry dock-wharves would reach them, from Norwegian barques, cumbered with wind-mills and with fragrant pine boards sticking out of dangerous-looking trap-doors cut freely in their slab-sides. Over the wall they could see the house-flags and the ensigns. Hubert knew them all, and he began to point each out to Edith—the orange-and-scarlet of Spain, the various, very various tricolours, the Norse and Swedish not yet "cleansed of the Union."

How dreamy it all was! Unconsciously Hubert's voice sank. The explanation died out. A glance had told him that Edith was not listening. The drowsy forenoon, the quiet river, with only an occasional arrival from Baltic ports drawing slowly up to her berth, the hum of bees—yes, actual bees; humble-bees as well, even as on Cheviot top yonder—there buzzing their best in Hubert's garden and hers! Wonderful! Ah, wonderful! Everything was wonderful. And the most wonderful of all, that Hubert was there. Hers too, wonderful for always. And then, with one of the curious leaps, common to the minds of women, Edith became suddenly unhappy—being so happy, and fearing that it could not possibly last for always.

Always, always! Women have not yet understood that there is no such thing. Only the word we keep as a child's toy to comfort ourselves withal. Love me always! Stay with me always! For always, always! And the quick years smile as they flit, knowing well that at a certain milestone on the way, or betwixt this one and the next, he whose

name is Not-Always awaits—the "Shadow feared by man," yet man's best friend for all that.

Yet, thanks be to God, that even then His name is not NEVER.

There were many "alwayses" in Edith's catechism that day. And Hubert subscribed to each one of them. Edith sat with the neglected books before her, neglected necessity and mercy in her lap, and gazed with dreamy blue eyes full of tender tears out on the river. It was, she said, believing the thought to be original, like their lives running past. And Hubert, whom Tim (let it be credited to him for righteousness) had caused to read Arnold, forbore to quote him.

The young man had found a sure way of easing any extreme tension in the way of sentiment. Or so at least he thought. If he had been a man better advised, or with that sixth sense (almost a special organ like the antennæ of some insects) which follows the moods and tenses of women as on a chart, he would have known that Edith had been over-wrought. And that the wisest thing he could do was to induce and make flow the reservoir of tears that was maintaining itself with difficulty behind the slight barrier of her quivering eyes.

But Hubert, being only a man and a doctor, saw Edith in perfect health to the eye, and so he asked what there was for dinner.

But he was astonished by what followed. He had been so sure, so proud of his tact. He had congratulated himself on his discovery. It had "worked well" with the furniture last night; why not with dinner to-day?

Instead of answering, Edith suddenly sank her head upon her knee, sobbing into her bare hands—sobbing steadily, not to be comforted. He rushed to his medicine chest and returned with an armful—eau-de-Cologne, smelling-salts, bromide of potassium, antifibrin. But Edith swept them all aside, crying:

"Oh, don't ever go away again. I want you to stay here—here—by me! Don't go away! Promise me you will never go away."

He hit it at last, by accident. He sat down quietly, and with her head on his shoulder he gently rubbed her temples, then the hair above the brow, and let her cry, cry, till the tears ran down on his hands, and the sobs began to stay themselves from sheer weariness.

"*Let her weep—let her weep!*"

The words of a woman came to him. And he now knew their truth. Edith calmed gradually, the sobs checking, then becoming no more than the heaving of a wave, last of all only broken little sighs, and ending with the broken words: "Oh, Hubert, I am so ashamed; I never, never did the like before."

And Hubert smiled knowing she never had had cause.

"So ashamed," she whispered; "and—there's a b-b-beef-steak-pie; such a nice one! M-m-mother brought it. And the p-p-potatoes are on to boil!"

This necessary troubling of the waters being over-past, a great calm ensued. The emotion which had shaken the girl ebbed away like sea-water through the scour of a land-locked bay, leaving all within clean-washed, reposeful, and cool.

No one came near them all day. Captain and Mrs. Leafy kept within doors, doubtless out of a kind thoughtfulness. The curate's house stood empty.

It was dinner-time after a while. The potatoes, spite of the sobs on their account, turned out perfect. Bread, salt, some pats of butter to go with the new potatoes, and a claret-jug of cool water from the far "hopes" of Cheviot. Then the pie—never was seen such a pie—confected by Mrs. Dillingham in secret, borne by Sue to the baker's, that it might have the highest professional skill, revealed itself in

beef tender and sound, gravy cold and thick, transparent "jell," and crust light as the flutter of the summer breeze on the blue Tor waters out beyond there, which they could see whenever they looked up. Never—no, never had Hubert eaten such a dinner. Edith also, who, though making less of the fleshpots of No. 109, was too healthy to despise them.

With the relieving tears, and the after information imparted by Hubert that she was "a little goose," appetite had returned. Earthly life took on new horizons, spread to ampler bournes, and the present became good enough to shut out any sad thoughts of the future.

Then they sat out on the green seat which stood in front of the flagstaff, and Hubert smoked a cigarette. They even talked a little. They could see, down by the ruins of the Old Quay, a score of boys paddling in the water, trying to find some relics of the disaster. One was carrying a little child on his back.

"I wonder if he is doing that for a girl?" said Edith.

"Of course he is!" agreed Hubert; "if it was for his mother he would have planted it down on the gravel and let it cry as much as it wanted."

"Horrid wretch!" exclaimed Edith. And got up to see if any poor little mite were so deserted by the unfeeling brotherhood of splashers.

She saw instead a tall, slim young man standing a little way from the gate, steadfastly regarding the house and surroundings. He caused a vague uneasiness to come over her. After what she had come through, that was not difficult.

"Oh, Hubert," she said, "some one is looking!"

"Well, they won't see you if you sit down," laughed her husband, flicking the ash off his cigarette.

"Quick, he is going away!"

Hubert rose, and saw the tall lean figure of Clarence Pritchard rapidly vanishing up the lane.

"I wonder what he can have been doing here!" he muttered; "has heard about the discovery of the diary, no doubt."

But the event soon passed from his mind, as also from Edith's. After all, it was only natural. Everybody, themselves excepted, took a walk on Sunday afternoons, and doubtless Clarence Pritchard had his father's key for the private gate a few hundred yards up the lane. Then they proceeded to make the usual discoveries. First, that they had always loved one another; with an eternal disagreement and dispute as to who had begun first. (This will hereafter be taken for granted.) Secondly, that the time seemed long, an eternity, since they had been married. Several ages had passed since he overleaped the Leafys' privet-hedge yesterday afternoon! (Was it only yesterday?)

Next, that Edith wanted a shawl and a footstool. (Hubert's discovery.) The shawl was found and brought, but there was not a footstool in the house! It did not matter! (Edith's interpolation.) But Hubert's old battered travelling bag did as well, or better, for it was big enough to put all four feet on.

It was a heavenly day. And oh, but they were very happy; so much better than a wedding trip. (Simultaneous discovery, like Adams and Leverrier!)

Edith dozed a little in the summer air, while Hubert, with the hand of a medical expert, drew the shawl about her throat and wrapped her hands in the pointed ends. He fetched another to put over her feet.

Then he went in, and, moving like a burglar in his own house, boiled the kettle, carried out the teatable, prowled about for all manner of things he could find, made tea, and when it was ready woke Edith with what he meant to be a kiss. But kisses

cannot be adjusted with medical or even surgical exactitude. So, as Edith was nodding slightly, the green seat being short in the back, the caress entangled itself somewhere between her hat-brim and her nose.

It served its purpose well enough, however. For the girl awakened, sat up in haste, to find her husband tranquilly pouring out a cup of tea.

"Mustn't think I can't do anything, Ede," he said; "now tell me if you could have made any better?"

"Oh, Hubert!" was all she could say. Such kindness took her by the throat. She had not been accustomed to it. Her father was kind, but his tenderness was of a rougher strain, and he did not believe in spoiling his children. Hubert, however, had no scruples; at least, at this period of his married life.

Then over the tea, while Edith gazed at Hubert, touching his coat sleeve occasionally just to make sure that he was her own, hers in the flesh, hers "for keeps," as Sue said, they suddenly found out that they had been monstrously idle—"lazy little pigs," Edith expressed it, though neither her inches nor Hubert's strictly admitted of the ultimate adjective.

"Let's go to church," proposed Edith, suddenly. "Oh, let's! We have so much to be thankful for, Hubert!"

So they walked out, locking the doors behind them. And Hubert felt extremely important as he assured himself that nothing would happen to the kitchen range in their absence, and frequently verifying the pocket he had put the door key into.

No sooner had they gone than Captain Leafy rushed out with his cane chairs, tables, and little stand-telescope. His wife followed him, smiling and shaking her head at his impatience.

"*Ouwff*!" he cried, pretending to wipe his brow; "glad that's over! I don't think I could have stood

much more of it! Shut up all day in the house, and such a day! Besides, I missed the Aberdeen packet! Never again; never!"

"Because you were asleep, captain," said his wife. "You know that you can see just as well from the upper window. And besides, it would be a pity if we couldn't give them their first day to themselves, poor young things! They will have happier days, I doubt not; but never, never one quite the same!"

"It's a pity you didn't give somebody a chance of being kind to us in that way a little sooner," commented her husband, with his eye on the telescope. "I declare," he cried, suddenly interested, "there's the *Electra*, young Pritchard's steam yacht. What's up now, I wonder?"

"I saw him down at the Old Wharf this afternoon," said his wife, "while you were asleep and missing the Aberdeen boat. I suppose he was waiting for her."

Her husband asked for particulars.

"Now, captain, I beg of you to know that I'm reading the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and I shan't ever get Christian to the Eternal City if you keep interrupting me like that."

"Wise man, that Christian," grunted Captain Leafy; "left his wife at home."

"Abraham," said his wife Sarah severely, "after all you've come through in your life, it ill becomes you to mock. These young folk have gone to church, and it would be telling you——"

"She's anchoring off the yard!" cried Captain Abraham Leafy, who only attended to his wife's remarks in the intervals of more important business, "and, I declare, it looks as if she were going on a longish cruise. These are banked fires, as sure as I'm Abe Leafy. She'll be waiting for a passenger, I'll be bound, and if we see her to-morrow morning when I draw up the blind—well, scarify me for a broad-beamed Dutchy!"

Meanwhile, Edith and her husband walked on sedately towards the little kirk in Kingdom Come Lane. It was an ancient structure, one of the earliest of Scotch kirks in England. It conserved its ancient barn-like simplicity of architecture, having been built in a back street at a time when the merest tolerance was extended to an alien sect. But now the "kirkers," as they were called in Thorsby, were a strong people, many of whom had kept their pews from immemorial time, the ancient oak hacked and carved by generations of pocket-knives, and the very skirting-boards grooved by the toes of restless boots through the long Sabbath services of a "True-Blue" creed.

An increasing congregation, and the necessity of doing in Rome as the Romans do, were responsible for spacious galleries round three sides of the kirk, and there was even talk of an organ and an organ-loft.

But the time was not yet. Mr. Marchbanks, the minister for twenty-one years, had just missed baptising Edith by arriving a month too late in order to take over Dr. MacDonald's charge. But he had seen the girl grow up from a child, and his eyes had often rested on her with modest pride, at Sunday-school or Bible-class, with the thought in his heart: "There sits a lamb of my flock."

He was glad, therefore, to see her on this, the second Sabbath evening after her marriage, and the first after her husband had been cleared of a painful suspicion, seated in the pew from which he had hardly ever missed her mother or herself during all the years of his ministry.

There was nothing bridal about their dress or demeanour. These were sober as the Presbyterian faith, well befitting to the grave walls which had shrined the white-spread tables of so many communion seasons. They had walked steadily through the parkward-bearing crowds, pouring out of the

city towards the Pritchard Park, the gift of "Thorsby's late illustrious citizen," or up towards Farne Height and Cheasely, or stretching away towards the moor on which stood Green Lane.

"I wonder which way father has gone to-night?" said Edith, as they turned sharply down the narrow elbow of Kingdom Come Lane, and came in sight of the ancient kirk.

But when Edith raised herself from her knees after her first "blessing" prayer, the unknown man, of whom she was vaguely conscious at the end of their pew, resolved himself into a very embarrassed and blushful out-and-outer, who, ashamed of being found there, reached a hand, and whispered: "I never thought you two would be out this evenin'!"

And then, as the beadle bore the "books" solemnly up the aisle, according to the old Scottish wont, he seemed to feel the necessity of some other explanation of his presence.

"He speaks well," he murmured, nodding in the direction of the entering minister. "He's giving a course of lectures. I dropped in just to hear what he had got to say."

That being so, it is the more to be regretted that the out-and-outer heard nothing extraordinary—not a word to combat "Iconoclast," not a word upon the mistakes of Moses, not a word concerning the fulfilment of prophecy. Only a simple sermon, the text merely, "Create in me a clean heart, O God," the exposition nothing remarkable; yet all spoken with a sweet inevitable attraction, true heart-speech, simple rather than profound, yearning and pensive rather than rousing or dominating, hopeful for every man and woman who could pray such a prayer, and yet, still more so for those who refused to pray, being consciously unworthy, but willing, rather, to trust themselves upon the infinite mercies of God.

The three said little when they went out, simply

asked for "the mother" and let the out-and-outer go. Edith, with keener sense, knew that her father was better not spoken to just then. And Hubert, with a new sense of happiness, took his cue from the little wife who pressed his arm. A sweet thing that, he thought. It was good to go to church . . . with Edith.

And as for Edith Salveson, she walked home with the blessing Aaronic falling on her head from a higher place than Mr. Marchbanks' pulpit. The final words ran in her heart, and with a new meaning now:

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace."

And when she said "thee," she meant Hubert. As for herself, she would take her chance alongside of him—close, quite close, alongside!

And she drew nearer to him as the stillness of Old Quay Lane shut them in, the rare gas-lamps growing rarer and the clatter of the water against the solitary piles of Old Quay coming louder in their ears.

It was their first time of truly "going home together."

CHAPTER XL

DISMISSED!

AND indeed it was an excellent thing that they had that day of peace and love, under the dusky heavens of Thorsby, clean-besomed by the westerly moorland airs, and last of all, with the benediction of the first high priest to carry home with them in the twilight.

For, on Hubert presenting himself at the yard the next morning, he found the surgery door locked, the plate removed, and the manager, Mr. John Brand Blunt, awaiting him with a very sombre countenance.

"I am sorry, Dr. Salveson, more sorry than I can say, to be the bearer of ill news," he said. "I have done what I could, but in the circumstances, Mr. Clarence Pritchard does not mean to continue your appointment of resident surgeon here. Neither does he mean to replace you. He was always opposed to the system, he bade me tell you. Further, I am commissioned to offer you two thousand pounds for the three cottages at Old Quay, and the surrender of all your rights to that property, including the private journals of Mr. Clarence's late father. I am also to pay you a week's salary in lieu of notice, and to allow you to take from Mr. Egerton's rooms everything that belongs to you. I need not tell you that I am ashamed of my message. I have, however, no alternative but to put it plainly before you!"

Hubert stood in amaze. He had been thinking happily over all the new plans for work and en-

deavour, sanitary and hygienic, which he was resolved to set on foot in the thronging, over-populated hive of the yard. And now he himself had no right to set a foot within its walls.

"But—but—Mr. Egerton," he stammered, "I had a talk with him and with you, you remember; I understood that he had equal powers with his brother, and that you meant to support me in my position and in the carrying out of my plans."

A curious dusky flush passed over Blunt's face.

"Ah," he said, "things have changed since that. Also Mr. Egerton's mind. He went on board his brother's yacht at nine o'clock last night at our private landing-stage, and has started for a long cruise—I believe among the Pacific Islands. He had jovial company on board."

"But he had no intention of doing anything of the kind when he was here," persisted Hubert.

"I suppose they came to some family arrangement," said the manager, "perhaps that it was impossible for a business of this kind to have two heads. And so Mr. Egerton took himself off. His brother was always his mother's favourite, at any rate, and would be sure of her support."

They went on gathering together all Hubert's instruments, cases, electric batteries, and appliances. Yes, certainly, John Brand Blunt would charge himself with the task of sending these down to Old Quay Cottage.

As Hubert stood in the doorway holding out his hand, Blunt kept it a moment saying: "But what am I to answer Mr. Pritchard about his proposition with regard to your houses at Old Quay?"

"I must consult my wife!" said Hubert, looking him straight in the eye, not without a certain angry pride.

As he went homeward he hardly recognised the familiar hedges, not yet regrimed after the comparative clearness of Sunday and the drenching of the

night-dews. His head felt curiously light, his brow constricted; he breathed fast, and his pulse ran like the light ticking of a lady's watch. Was it possible, he asked himself, that he, Hubert Salveson, who had never fainted in his life, should now be on the point of it?

Voices cried aloud within him—fierce, angry, desperate at being tricked.

"Oh, if it had only been myself, I should not have cared! But I am married, I have a wife; and now I am penniless, disgraced. Even now all the world will know that I have been turned out of Pritchard's! Edith! Edith!"

Wild ideas ran races through his brain. Could he ask his father? Never? For Edith's sake? Well, even so, he would only be refused. If—if—there was that little recovered case—other things—the High Level Bridge! Tush, he would not be a coward—he, Hubert Salveson! But how to tell Edith? Ah, that was hard—hard—hard! What if he accepted the two thousand——?"

Presently Hubert was opening the higher gate, that which showed the neatly sanded road leading to the back door. He could hear Edith singing somewhere about her work—one of her mother's old Scottish songs:

> Better lo'ed ye canna be,
> Will ye no come back again?

Well he was back, but how? A disgraced man—penniless. Oh Edith!

"Why, Hubert, what are you doing here at this hour?"

She looked at his face, and with the quick intuition of a daughter of generations of working men, she understood.

"You have lost your place!" she cried.

And she opened her arms to him. Her face shone up to his—yes, gloriously.

"Now you will see how I love you," she cried, taking him within a strong clasp.

And this time it was not Edith who wept.

Then Hubert had the surprise of his life. He had been educated never to have money and never to feel the need of it. His father, out of old Indian habit, had devoted half-an-hour every Monday morning to the expenses of the family, and the boys' allowances were also occasionally paid. If not, why, then, they went without. But Hubert had, as a result of this, and perhaps also owing to temperament, the undeveloped money sense. Practical enough concerning all the details of his work, and comprehensive in planning on a large scale, he was dazed by a monetary responsibility undertaken for another, and that other his young wife.

Edith, with true feminine instinct, washed her hands, passed her fingers through her hair, glanced in the "dresser" glass, and then, taking Hubert's hand, led him into the little parlour. There was a dainty sheaf of Captain Leafy's flowers on the table, and others about the new furniture. The sight of the room, so pretty, so Edith-ish, took Hubert by the throat at once. Nevertheless they sat down side-by-side on the chintz-covered sofa which Edith had picked up such a bargain second-hand.

"Now tell me all about it," she commanded, keeping fast hold of his hand, "we can manage all right, you and I. Never fear. Father was turned off twice, and with two houses to go on paying for. It would be a shame if, with what we have, we can't rub along till something turns up. And I'll make it turn up and you shall help me."

"Edith, you are braver than I!"

"Not a bit," said the consoler, patting her husband on the cheek; "I know more, that is all."

Then Hubert told her how Mr. Clarence had taken over complete control of the business, how their friend Mr. Egerton had gone away a long trip

on his brother's yacht, and how the new head of the yard had resolved to have no resident doctor, had indeed always been opposed to it.

"Umm," said Edith ironically, "he did not mention it, I'll be bound, while his father was alive."

Then Hubert told his wife of the offer of two thousand pounds for their cottages, and all the rights of Old Quay pier.

"Oh!" gasped Edith. And Hubert thought she was pleased.

"After all we could easily get another house!" he said, "and with the two thousand pounds——!"

"Hush, let me think!"

And Edith's busy, practical little brain went over the possibilities.

"He is willing to give two thousand pounds; that is, the yard is. They want to get this property back. There is something behind that, something he knows, our young man with the narrow eyes and no eyelashes. Two thousand pounds is about forty to forty-five pounds a year. Supposing we let the curate's house—and it is so near the yard that we can easily—we will get about thirty pounds, less our share of the taxes, say twenty-two pounds. The Leafys sit rent free for their lifetime, but pay their own taxes. That makes no difference to us. Then there's this house. We would never get such a house for double the money; not that that matters. But there's a clause in the will that forbids us to let it. We can sell but not let. Now we couldn't get any sort of a house fit for you to commence in under a pound a week on a good main road. But we could take a shop, put up a partition, and so make a surgery. We could dispense our own medicines, and have a boy to deliver them. Yes, I see it; I see it!"

Edith was growing excited with her own arithmetical visions.

"But how are we to pay for all this?" said Hubert, whose intellect followed more slowly and rested longer on the difficulties.

Edith did not reply directly. She only waved her hand as a signal that her calculations were too abstruse to be interrupted.

"Sixteen, eleven, what I had on Saturday; say sixteen; and I know where to get perhaps fifteen more—thirty-one. And your wages, two weeks—— What, you never thought of asking for them? And the week's notice; you have that. Three two's six—thirty-seven——!"

She clapped her hands.

"We'll go and see about it at once. I always notice shops and houses to let. And I know the landlord of this one. He comes to Mr. Marchbanks' church. Come on. We won't take their old two thousand pounds, though it looks a lot. We can live without it—the bull-dog (you must get your brother to fetch him), and you, and I. Oh, be sure there's something that they know and we don't! If there wasn't, they would never give all that for those old cottages down at the end of a lane and no thoroughfare!"

By this time Edith, having taken command of the financial situation was putting on her hat, and extracting her wearing gloves out of a drawer. Her usually calm eyes fairly sparkled. She was such a radiant Edith, that Hubert, who never could understand that there was a time for everything, would have taken her in his arms; but she repulsed him with as much austere dignity as if he had attempted to caress the chairman of a Chartered Company about to annex a new province of Empire.

"Sit down and write a refusal of Mr. Pritchard's offer," she commanded, "and say that your wife will call to receive the wages due to you in terms of your engagement, as noted in his diary by Mr. James Pritchard. They are bound to pay you till

they dismiss. Mind and say wages, for you are an engaged servant. If you were only a doctor just, you could not recover your fee. So mind, write as I say!"

Too much astonished to reflect on the strangeness of Edith's small head being able to collect and retain all these details, Hubert wrote to Messrs. James Pritchard & Co., of the Thorsby and East Dene Shipbuilding Works, a polite declinature of their offer to purchase Thorsby Old Quay cottages and pier rights, made to him that day by Mr. John Brand Blunt, their acting manager, Dr. Salveson having other views as to his property there. He thanked the firm for the consideration they had shown him during their brief connection, and asked them to advise the cashier that Mrs. Hubert Salveson would call to receive the amount of wages due while he, Hubert Salveson, was their servant.

"Why not I?" asked Hubert, looking up when commanded to add the last sentence.

"Because they would know that they could take you in. Give me the key of the side gate. I will leave it at the office, and ask Mr. McMath, the cashier, to send some one to let me out by the front gate."

"Why not Will, your brother?"

Edith looked at him compassionately. "We are in disgrace at the yard, you and I, Hubert," she said; "but there is no use bringing any one else into it!"

Hubert blushed deeply.

"I never thought of that!" he said; "of course not!"

"Of course you didn't think, dear old silly," said his wife, and this time her austerity melted of itself. For a moment only, though. The next she was back again at her calculations as to ways and means.

"Mind you," she said, "if we find my Mr. Gilmerton in—the landlord, you know—you are not to say anything about price; not to speak even. I

will do the talking. All you have to do is to tell me if you think the place will do for your business—doctor's things and so on!"

"Running water!" said Hubert, who had a fixed idea.

"Very well," said Edith, "but don't find fault. We can put up partitions ourselves. Father and I can, and there are two or three troughs and slabs here more than we want. We will make it do. It's the situation that counts."

Some of his wife's enthusiasm began to communicate itself to Hubert. They went out, locking the door, without a thought of anything to eat. Perhaps, deep hidden in the little housewife's undersoul there remained a knowledge of the better half of a beef-steak pie. But certainly all her working mind was occupied with the things falsely called sordid—ways and means of owing no man anything.

They found the landlord as Edith had expected to find him, two doors off the vacant house, in his own grocer's shop. He was a broad-faced, kindly eyed man, with an affectionate manner, even when he cut up the bacon.

"The reason that we sell such good hams is that we rear our own pigs—and love them."

Mr. Gilmerton had the manner of loving them even in the shop, and when exposed as streaky, or lean, or marly, upon the counter.

"I want you to let my husband and myself see your corner house, two doors from here, if you please," said Edith briskly. "I notice it is still to let."

"But," said the grocer, pausing in his wrapping up pounds of tea, "it is not meant for a dwelling house, or fitted for one. Indeed, it can hardly be said to be fitted at all. I had meant to fit it to the convenience of the shop-tenant."

"All the better," said Edith. "Can we see it?"

"What line might you be thinking of?" said Mr,

Gilmerton cautiously. "O' course, I could not let for anything in the grocery way. That would be taking the bread out of my own mouth. Nor 'licensed-to-sell-or-retail'—such being my opinions as President of the Star-of-Cheviot Rechabite Tent."

Edith reassured him that they had no idea of competing in either of these businesses with the present local talent.

"This is my husband, Dr. Hubert Salveson," said Edith brightly. "He has left his position as resident surgeon in the yard, and thinks of starting a little practice of his own here, quite near to the yard. Mr. Clarence Pritchard does not intend to have a resident surgeon there any longer."

The grocer whistled a long smooth note like a biggish blackbird in a white apron.

"Ah," he said, with a curious apparent lack of connection, "I never did like that Budden. But I suppose you will want a sight of fittin' for a doctor, and that would come heavy on the rent——"

"Oh," interrupted Edith, "we won't ask you to spend a penny more than you would have had to do for any other tenant. Only just do it in our way, and we'll do the rest."

"Then there's security," suggested the canny norther.

"My husband is the second son of Surgeon-General Salveson of the Manor (Hussh, Hubert!) and though you don't remember me, *I* know you very well, Mr. Gilmerton. You used to teach me in Sunday School. I am—I was—Edith Dillingham!"

"Bless me, little Edith, that used to sit on my knee, and look on my book, she was so little! Where were my eyes? I need stronger glasses now to look at young ladies. Mine are only good for slicing pork! Well, well; who'd 'a' thought it?"

And without troubling to make any toilet or even to put on his hat (if he possessed one besides his broad-brimmed Sunday topper), Mr. Gilmerton led

the way, with his hands as usual wrapped in his spotless white apron.

The corner house was one to send Hubert into ecstasies. But Edith's elbow sternly checked these. In spite of the church connection they might add to the rent. A great advantage was that there were two doors, one very dignified and private in the side street, the other, which must have "Surgery" in large letters to the front. That door could stand open. Then a second announcement, more modest, on the inner glass-door (ground) might give Hubert's degrees—"the letters after his name" as they said in Thorsby. While by the discreet door in Dunham Street Edith might pop in and out without disturbing either the patients waiting in the ante-room, or those with whom her husband was busy in the surgery proper. Perfect!

Edith saw herself, taught by Hubert, busily aiding in the wrapping up and despatching of drugs—perhaps even in the compounding of the more simple. She felt a positive call to use the pestle and pill-roller. There was plenty of running water, and Hubert signalled his approbation to his wife.

Edith instantly made an offer, which, after much haggling, unpleasant to Hubert but the breath of life to his wife, she consented to raise by two pounds on condition of a two years' lease, to be properly drawn up by a lawyer, the landlord and tenant to share that expense.

"We won't live here, of course," said Mrs. Hubert, a little grandly—she was grand for strictly business purposes—"we have two or three houses of our own down at Old Quay, you know."

And so, having paid an instalment of the rent, the young people went home lessees of an eligible corner surgery. As they passed Ray's, the lamp- and gas-fitting people, Edith dropped in, ordered a doctor's red lamp, extra size, and selected the style of lettering.

CHAPTER XLI

A SHILLING IN THE SLOT

HUBERT had never been happier in his life—certainly not on the day of his marriage—than on this very Monday, when it seemed that he had received his death warrant. He could even endure the coming and going of the message boys without the persistent thought common to young householders: "How in the world am I ever to pay their masters?" It was not his affair any more. *It was Edith's.* He felt that up till now he had not half known his wife. Which thing, indeed, was true. He might even have said "quarter," and been well within the mark.

Hubert was one of those not rare spirits who do not flinch at any amount of labour, but who are affrighted, cowed, harassed, by the financial details of a household. With another sort of wife, Hubert might have gone through the world, haunted by the perpetual fear of the sheriff's officer. But, with the wife he had found, there was small fear of that.

Presently Edith sat down with her money-bag and note-book. She had a sort of religious air—Saint Theresa kneeling on the brick floor of her Siennese barn-church was not more devout. She had the air of one who has a hard task to perform, but a task whose very difficulty is a pleasure.

Hubert laid the table, and had it not been for an awkward jingle of knives and forks, he might have finished before Edith turned towards him. She started up.

"Oh, Hubert," she said, "how dare you?"

"Well," he said humbly, "we cannot all be chancellors of the exchequer, you know, and I was doing all I could."

"You've laid the knives and forks on the wrong sides," criticised Edith, "and you've put down soup plates for the steak pie!"

"Oh," said Hubert, "we never thought anything of a little thing like that up at Spenny Dene Hospital. And at the yard I generally ate off the operating table!"

"You horrid thing; you don't deserve nice eaties! You will be taught different in this house—yes, my word!"

In the afternoon Hubert was sent out for a walk. Edith was busy, it appeared, and when he came back he missed something that had been there before. After a while he located the blank space in the parlour, and after infinite consideration he discovered that the piano was gone!

Edith had not yet returned, but she came back radiant and clapped fourteen pounds on the table in gold, together with one five-pound note.

"Nineteen pounds!" she cried, "clear!"

"What?" said Hubert, bewildered and somehow ashamed.

"I've sold the piano to Martha Priest, whose father promised her one three years ago, when I had mine. I had it sent off by their van-man before you should come in. It was my very own, you see. I got fourteen pounds down, and anyway, I don't believe you care for music much. When we get rich we can buy another. And—and—I hope you won't be angry, Hubert, but I went across to East Dene, where I wouldn't be known, and pawned my gold watch for five pounds."

Edith's eyes were glorious—wet sapphires with the sun looking through them. Her lips were full, radiant, triumphant. She leaned on Hubert's

shoulder, and shook his heart with the marvels of a woman's love, and the strange new world into which he had come. He knew that people sold things to keep body and soul together. He had noted with a smile (as if the place were a mint of humours inexhaustible) the three gilt balls over the pawnbroker's shop. But that *his* wife, the daughter-in-law of Surgeon-General Salveson of the Manor, should do such things as a matter of course, fairly staggered him.

But the love that had worked in her heart! For him! Was there ever any like it? And she—the strange thing was that she seemed to think nothing of all that! What she cared about was the money. She rejoiced over that; she almost fondled that, counting it over and over lovingly ere dropping it finally into her purse.

"And I did more than that," she cried, between times; "I went and got your six pounds from Mr. McMath, the cashier, and offered to take over the operating chairs and table at a valuation. Clarence Pritchard had told McMath to get rid of them. I offered him half invoice price, so I got the lot for just six pounds; and father is to send them along to the Cheviot Road surgery to-night. They can be stored in the one room that is finished. He is to get the key at our landlord's!"

"Edith," said Hubert in an awed voice, "you are the most wonderful thing in the world. Why, I always thought I was clever and could put a thing through, but I am a baby to you—a petted, useless, yawping baby!"

. . . . . .

For a few days husband and wife did not see much of each other till the evening. They divided up their work carefully in the morning, Edith doing most of the outdoor ordering and hastening, while Hubert, with his brass plate already up, and the appointments of his yard surgery, occupied

himself in continuing his treatment of those whom he had already known among the men.

Cheviot Road and the new surgery with the big red lamp at the corner of Dunham Street faced directly down towards the main entrance of the yard. The first day, at the hours of entrance and egress, quite a crowd collected to watch the putting up of the imposing lamp, and the appearance of the big plate with its inscription:

> DR. HUBERT SALVESON, M.B., C.M. EDIN.
>
> LATE
>
> RESIDENT-SURGEON AT MESSRS. PRITCHARD'S YARD.
>
> In: 8 to 9 a.m.; noon to 2 p.m.; and 5 to 6.30 p.m.
>
> Night Address: "OLD QUAY HOUSE,"
>
> First to right down the Lane.

Among other things, Hubert, having now decided to take private practice, hastened to call upon his senior neighbours in the profession. As a Thorsby man he received a hearty welcome from all, except Dr. Budden, who looked upon him as a pledge-breaker. Had he not promised that he would not take private practice? Certainly, so long as he remained in the employment of the firm, but now that was different. He was a married man, and must take his chance with the rest. If ever he could be of any service to Dr. Budden; but at this point the family physician snorted and turned on his heel. Hubert made his way out alone.

Mr. Marchbanks arrived to see the installation and so interrupted work that Edith had almost to show him the door. Her father came every evening,

and being a handy man, the surgery soon began to take on a shipshape appearance.

Finally, Edith having found the curate to be a young man belonging to Thorsby, living with his parents, advertised the third cottage to let, and had an offer of thirty pounds the very next morning, through a firm of lawyers. She accepted, and in the evening appeared a vanload of furniture, another of books, a couple of armchairs of immense size brandishing their legs in the air, and lastly the new tenant of Quay End cottage—no other than Mr. John Brand Blunt himself.

He explained that a deaf and dumb relative was coming to keep house for him, and that, pending her arrival from Seaton Delaval, he would "batch it."

Both Hubert and Edith would have liked another tenant; but, after all, there was no fault to be found with Mr. Blunt. He had certainly been very kind when Hubert was in prison, and in the matter of his dismissal he had done no more than his duty. The cottage would be quite near his work, and convenient for meals. He was tired of the cookshop, he said. Altogether there was no real reason against letting the house to him, and, a great virtue in Edith's eyes, he paid down his first half-year's rent like a man.

In a fortnight the surgery was going "full blast," as the out-and-outer expressed it. Edith had financed an entire installation of medicines, had paid for most of them from the wholesale people, and given a bill at three months for the rest. This last was against her principles. But she counted on the returns beginning to come in long before then. Late and early she laboured, and had it not been for good Mrs. Dillingham the young *ménage* would have fared rather poorly at times. They fell into a bad habit of sending out for a few things, ready cooked, in order to continue longer at work without

having to go home down the lane to Old Quay House.

Edith learned with great rapidity, made no mistakes after once being shown how, and soon became an efficient, though unregistered, laboratory assistant. The "boy" had been introduced by Sue, who, being an expert in boys, vouched for him. He had been a pupil-teacher in the school she went to; but, finding that the need of earning immediate money was urgent and the normal school course far to seek, he decided to cast in his lot with Sue Dillam's big sister and her husband, the doctor. He was a smart boy, small of stature, it is true; but, in revenge, bore the noble name of Howard Stanley. So far Howard was not allowed to enter by the glass surgery door, but had to take the private side entrance in Dunham Street, which grieved the heart of Master Howard like a personal indignity. For he had become convinced that, through the surgery of Dr. Hubert Salveson, lay his own way to the frock coat and tall hat of a learned profession. But nevertheless, Edith soon curbed that haughty soul, and Howard carried pill boxes and carried 2-oz. bottles, with the directions written in the print-hand which the dispenseress practised at nights with such zeal, as if he had vowed his very life thereto.

But after the first fortnight, Edith, biting the butt of her pen in the receipt of custom, perceived that the outgoings more than balanced the receipts. Yet she had faithfully rendered the significant reminder at the close of each case of illness, but so far had received little. The transients hardly ever thought of paying, even for medicines. And there was that bill at three months which rode her spirits during every waking hour.

Clearly something must be done, and that immediately.

It happened that, as usual on the first coming of a young doctor to a neighbourhood, quite a number

of marvellous cures were put down to him. He had saved this man's arm, when the hospital surgeons wished to amputate; this other's right eye, blind for months; this child, whom all the rest had "given up." Hubert was well known in the yard, and men talked freely to him; but, somehow, they appeared shamefaced about paying the doctor. This would not do. As usual practical Edith had a plan.

They talked it over at supper that night—a rabbit-and-chicken pie sent down by Sue. They were business partners now—Hubert and Edith. If it had not been for Captain and Mrs. Leafy, who came in each day to weed and water the flowers, their garden at Old Quay would soon have been in a sorry state. The kitchen furnace had not been lighted for ten days and, though Edith did the daily round of duty, she felt that she would be shamed for ever if her mother's eye took in the result. Why, it was dirtier, untidier than . . . than Sue's room on Fridays! But Hubert, with the true masculine tolerance for dust, which sets most women crazy, never even noticed the difference.

Edith put the matter to her husband plainly.

"Hubert, we have got to get in some money. We can't send a debt collector, because it's not legal. And, if it were, it would only frighten people away. But there are lots who *can* pay and won't. They do pay the big doctors—a guinea or two guineas—yes, before they go in. We work among poor people, but people who would pay if they only knew they had to. Fancy, Hubert, there are men, hundreds of them, in the yard who make from four to five pounds a week. Now, I know you will cry out that it's lowering the dignity of the profession, and so on. But we have to live, you and I."

"I will do anything that is not forbidden by the Medical Council," said Hubert. "God knows I have no reason to be proud."

"Well," said Edith, "I know these Thorsby folk.

I ought to. I was born here. I have lived among them all my life. If they can get anything for nothing, they won't pay. If they can't, they will think all the more of the thing because they have to pay for it."

"Well—what's coming out of that clever little head now?" smiled Hubert.

"Come up and see, Hubert, if you have finished your supper!"

"Where?"

"Up to the surgery; it should be fixed by now."

And Hubert, tangled somehow in an intrigue too deep for him, took his hat and followed the little blue toque with the feather pointing decidedly forward.

A gas-jet shone within. The fanlight was brilliantly illuminated. Edith knocked and the out-and-outer opened. A strange man appeared, a huge screwdriver with a two-foot crossbar handle in his grasp. The ante-chamber was the same as Hubert had left it, seated round and round, a stove in the fireplace, white German tiles alternately with the deep blue of the latest pseudo-Dutch. The table in the middle was strewn professionally with the latest penny papers, which at least were a change from the *Punch* and the *Graphic* of ten weeks ago.

But what staggered Hubert was the curious barrier in black-and-gold metal which surrounded the door into the surgery. In it were two turnstiles, each fitted with a brass slot. Over that to the right was the inscription:

CONSULTATIONS ONE SHILLING.

WITH OR WITHOUT MEDICINE.

N.B.—Please put the Shilling in the Slot and the Gate will Open.

Over the other, to the left, Hubert read the words:

This Gate for Yardsmen and their Families only. CONSULTATION SIXPENCE.

Hubert shrank back.

"Edith, I can't," he said, "what would the others say? What would my father——?"

Then it was the fate of Dr. Hubert Salveson to learn yet a little more of the wife he had married. He had never seen her temper. Lover-like he fancied she had not got one.

"The others!" she said scornfully, "your father! What have the others, what has your father done for you? Only stood in your way, and tried to prevent you working. Now *I* am helping you to work. It's this, Hubert, or we can't pay our way. It's common honesty, that's all!"

It was on the question of money that Edith was adamant; not to be rich, mark you, but that others should at least treat them with something of that same "common honesty" she used herself.

Hubert laughed. She was right, that wondrous girl. She was always right. Had he not deliberately chosen that life, why then should he hesitate? Great doctors made their footmen exact their guineas before ushering their patients into the presence. Hubert with his sixpenny and shilling turnstiles—well, that made no matter. The principle was the same.

"We must have a Free Hour, however," he said; "there are many very poor people——"

"I know—I know——," cried Edith, "I have thought of that."

And she exhibited another notice to hang over the ante-room stove, throned about with royal-blue Dutch tiles:

FREE CONSULTATIONS EVERY DAY From 2.30 to 3.30 p.m.

"That is after the men are all back in the yard," she explained; "and here, you see, is the lever at the back, which throws the gates out of gear. Then," she hurried on breathlessly, fearful lest he should stop her, "as they come in, each patient must take a ticket out of this box at the outer door and come through the gates in order of arrival."

"Do you think they will understand all that on the Cheviot Road?" asked the out-and-outer. "I have my doubts."

"Well," said Edith, "we have got to teach them, that's all. I will, and Howard Stanley, when there's nobody else. Most of them can read, and there will always be somebody willing to explain. And you, father, will drop in of an evening on your way home, and Sue too. Oh, we'll teach them. It's only getting started."

"They'll call me a quack," said Hubert, a little uncertainly.

"Nonsense! blame me," said Edith; "besides everybody in Thorsby knows that you are *not* a quack. You are your father's son——"

"He'll kill me when he hears of it," groaned Hubert; "or, no, he'll think it's a fulfilment of one of the worst vials."

"And besides," said Edith, determined to have all over at once, "I've got 'Formerly House Surgeon at East Dene Hospital,' added to the plate; and oh, Hubert, I do wish you would let me have your diplomas framed, especially the one 'with honours!' They would look splendid."

"I won't! I shan't!" cried Hubert, stamping his first married stamp on the floor.

The out-and-outer laughed.

"It strikes me," he said, "that this business is going to be run *as* a business."

And the turnstile fitter, busy with his big screw-driver and much amused, was of the same opinion. He resolved on the spot to have no more doctor's bills.

CHAPTER XLII

WORK AND OVERWORK

THE innovation succeeded. It was much talked about. In general the elder practitioners only laughed, and kept the news as a choice thorn to prick the surgeon-general withal. They would congratulate him on his son's success. Only Dr. Budden was really angry. He went about breathing threatenings and slaughter. He would bring the subject up at the next British Medical Council as "derogatory to the dignity of the profession." Hubert's former comrades came over from East Dene to scoff at Salveson. They remained, however, to lend a hand. The steady stream of consultants astonished as much as Edith attracted them. They liked seeing her busy with her cash-box (which she took to be locked up in Mr. Gilmerton's safe every night), busy with her dispensing, and the overseeing of the crowd in the waiting-room, so that she had neither eyes nor ears for the smart young men from East Dene. Yet they liked even that and took off their coats to be allowed to stay.

But after the first five months were over, Edith began to look a little pale. Her eyes were big and radiant; perhaps too radiant. And old Dr. Growling, who looked in often in passing (he had a rich family practice in the West End and this did not at all concern him), said to Hubert:

"You had better look to your wife, my boy. You are making her work too hard!"

"I——" exclaimed Hubert. "I do all I can to

keep her at home, but she is never out of the place!"

"That's it," said Dr. Growling; "you must get an assistant. Pull down your barns and build greater. Let your wife have an easier time, or—well, *you* know as well as *I* do!"

Hubert started. He had seen Edith so continuously that he had noticed nothing. But certainly she seemed pale, far too pale. She was, however, in the highest spirits. The business was paying. They had made over sixty pounds clear, and as for the wholesale drug people, their bill was in the back of the fire long ago. "And please God," said Edith devoutly, "they would never have to grant another."

About this time, curiously enough, there was a burglar scare in Thorsby. One dark November afternoon the safe at Old Quay Cottage was opened, and a window in the gable left up. Edith rejoiced. She had had the forethought to put their money in their landlord's strong-box, from which she took it herself twice a week. There was nothing in James Pritchard's old safe except certain papers of no particular value. These had been looked at and left behind. The police found no clue. Still Hubert did not like to leave his wife too much alone after that. He had a connection made through the brick wall at the back, as well as in front, to the cottage occupied by Captain and Mrs. Leafy.

Still all would not serve. Edith had been too completely shocked by her adventure with Jo Challoner ever to be thoroughly comfortable alone in Old Quay Cottage; and indeed the place was over-lonely for a young wife.

They talked the matter over in the dark hours, and agreed that at the New Year the out-and-outer and his wife, with Sue and Will, should come to Old Quay Cottage, dwelling rent free; and that they themselves should take the vacant house next

door to, and above the surgery with entrance at No. 3, Dunham Street.

"And you will let me arrange it with Mr. Gilmerton," said Edith imperiously. "You know I can make a better bargain than you."

Hubert knew, and so it was arranged. The persuasion which was needed to induce the "old people" to accept, proved quite another matter. And at last it was only the production of the copy of the will (which allowed sale but forbade letting) and her daughter's picture of the "place going to wrack and ruin" which moved Mrs. Dillingham to pity. Also the thought of being near her Edith, who "would be out and in all day."

But after it was arranged, Master Will announced his intention of "going into lodgings." He was getting "fifteen bob a week" and could make a bit more by overtime. He was not going to vegetate in a hole, nor yet "live on our Ede's coat-tails."

Sue, however, had no such scruples. Old Quay Cottage was a house built of stone, and Agnes Anne Jacox lived in a brick cottage. It had a proper drawing-room, also a dining-room, whereas Agnes Anne Jacox had to take her meals in the kitchen. So would they at "the house" down Old Quay Lane. But then they didn't need to, and nobody saw them; least of all Miss Jacox!

"It will be splendid for father," said Edith to Hubert; "and oh, it was so good of you to think of it. He has let 109 already—it is a picked house you see, and there are ever so many people waiting for it, on account of the fixed wash-tubs Then with only the half of the taxes to meet, the rents will soon pay out the Moon-Washington Building Society people, and my father will have something for his old age."

"He deserves it," said Hubert, "he was very kind to me!"

During all the time that they remained at Old

Quay Cottage they saw much of the Leafys, but Mr. John Brand Blunt hardly at all. Yet each afternoon, on returning from the surgery, Edith would find in a green glazed vase of Dunmore pottery, a little sheaf of the rarest flowers, the cost of which moved her housekeeper's heart infinitely more than their beauty. But the blank-faced man kept away, bowing only when he passed them, with a kind of sorrowful gravity.

"I wonder if it is because he thinks we are angry about your being sent away from the yard," suggested Edith, who began to be sorry for her first impressions.

"Best thing that ever happened to us in the world," asserted Hubert.

"Let's ask him to tea," suggested Edith ; "he looks so sad."

But John Brand Blunt refused the invitation, alleging work for the yard. He had to meet Mr. Clarence, he said, and spend the night over plans.

As to Mr. Blunt himself there were various opinions. He was harsh with the men, not in James Pritchard's way, but with a cold severity which nothing could move. Still he was not unjust, and it was universally agreed that he was making the place pay. Business "hummed," and most of his evil deeds were set down to Clarence Pritchard, who pervaded the yard like a malignant spirit, his pale face set, his chilly, light-grey eyes glinting—saluting no one, nor yet returning the salute of any. With one voice the yard declared its preference for "Owd Jamie's roughest tongue-thrashings and worst dressings-down——" In the vernacular, "these made t'a fur fly, but brak' no bones, after he had done gollyin' at ye!"

It was about this time that Dr. Horace Growling began to call in at the surgery of his own accord. He was an old friend of Hubert's father, and one of the few who still dared to speak his mind to that

busy student of numerical prophecy. The subject of the assistant had been put off. They were doing very well, and Hubert, engrossed from morning till night, failed to observe the pale face and slower step of Edith as she came up the brae which led from Old Quay House to their new home next the surgery.

Horace Growling noted it, however, with the eye of an old family doctor of thirty years' standing.

"You're killing your wife," he said abruptly one day in the surgery, during a temporary lull. "One would think that you had become a mere splint binder and prescription writer. You are breaking God's law, by making your little wife work like that! Man, have you got no eyes in your head?"

Hubert stared, paled, shut his mouth sharp, and swallowed something immensely big and immensely dry.

"No!" he faltered.

"Yes!" said Dr. Horace Growling grimly, "and the sooner you get her out of this the better for her, and you, and all!"

"She won't go!"

"She must go. Give me your authority and I will speak to her, or, indeed, whether or not. I'm not going to stand by and see murder done!"

He carried out his intention, and encountered a far more determined opposition than he had counted on.

"I've worked all my life," said Edith; "I am quite well. Being pale—that's nothing."

"Yes, worked," said Dr. Growling, "but without anxiety. It's the two together, work and worry, that kill. Moreover, you've not been frank with your husband."

"Ah, Hubert," murmured Edith, paling even more, "it would trouble him in his work if he thought that anything was wrong with me!"

"Let him be troubled," cried the doctor angrily,

"it's what he's there for. You must get out of here—no, *not* to your mother's down the lane. That's much too near! You would be trotting up that hill all the time to see if imp Howard, Earl of Derby, there, were rolling out the pills properly. You must go to the country! Can't afford it? Fiddlesticks! I've got a house. I'll drive you out this very night. Come and brighten me up. Your husband can leave the assistant in charge after six, and ride out, or come by train!"

Edith shook her head. The doctor turned away to the window of the little upstairs parlour in disgust.

"Talk about the pride of the rich!" he said; "you're a working-man's daughter. And that's why I am taking trouble with you, you ungrateful girl. I won't see you running yourself to death when there is no need. I would make that man of yours my assistant to-morrow; aye, and leave him the business, on equitable terms, of course, after a year or two. Oh, for his father's sake, madam, not for his, the rascal; nor yet for yours, you disobedient, stiff-necked minx! Only you wouldn't take it for pride's sake. Very well then, an assistant he has to get, or by the blessed shade of Galen, I will report him to the officers of the law, for employing an unqualified dispenser in his pharmacy!"

Edith laughed at the indignant old gentleman. But after he had flounced out she did some more figuring. The figures decided that, as the spring was advancing, she, Edith Salveson, was not seeing enough of her husband. He was certainly overworking, and would end by killing himself.

So the next time the junior surgeon from Spenny Dene came over to get points about Hubert's dispensary, Edith asked him if he knew of a decent assistant who would be willing to sleep in the house, and take the night work, so as to let them go somewhere in the country. Howard Stanley's

mother had been a cook in her time, and even now was getting a foot into the Dunham Street *ménage* as charwoman, housemaid, general domestic, and chief butler. Howard himself slept on a scissors bed —Hubert's old one out of the yard—in the little bottle-room at the back of the surgery, which smelt for ever of violent spices and the grey dust they roll pills in.

The junior house-surgeon grunted, considered, and, of course, knew just the man for them. His name was Theophilus Oglethorpe Larkins, and he was a good all-round man. Also he was on the outlook for experience, *plus* a small remuneration.

"Which," said the Spenny Dene house surgeon, speaking of the experience, "he is in every sense likely to get here. Whether he gets his full dose of sleep is another matter."

It was about this time, and before Hubert took his wife out of town (or Edith took her husband to the country, or Dr. Growling ordered the pair of them out—whichever way you look at it), that the Salvesons made a cautious attempt to dispense with the shilling-in-the-slot turnstiles, which were so offensive to the more mediocre and humourless members of the learned profession of medicine

Through the intervention of a neighbouring tailor, and the precise and personal direction of Edith, Howard Stanley found himself attired in a smart suit of dark blue serge, with the faintest braiding of a lighter shade—oh, very slight. Hubert had stuck out for black, but had been immediately overruled, on the ground that the suggestion of mourning might have a bad effect on business.

Thus attired, Howard Stanley waited one day at the receipt of custom, to take over the regulation shillings and sixpences. But only for one day! It was the mid-day hour of the yardsmen when he began operations; that is, in which they are falsely supposed to eat their dinners. The turnstiles had

been removed, and Howard installed in a high office chair.

But the yardsmen, rough fellows and full of their games, who had been accustomed to be treated officially for their sixpence down and let go their way, resented the new arrangement. They made Howard Stanley's life a burden to him.

"Look'ee here, young 'un," cried a riveter, "how do I know but what ye won't pocket all that cash? An' then a rare long account there will be comin' in to my missus one o' them days, the day you are hanged, maybe, young gallows' bird!"

"How d'ye tell a sixpenny 'un from a bob-er?" cried another. "Speak up, ye hamstrung mule. Get down out o' that there chair and run round with the bottles."

The young man of the honourable names, after trying abuse, fell back on tears, and went behind to find his master, who was busy reducing a crushed finger to some sort of shape. Howard Stanley resigned his position on the spot.

Hubert went into the ante-room and told the men that he had enough to do patching them up, without having them come there to behave like babies on his premises. But this done, he commanded them to put their sixpences and shillings into the slots themselves, even as aforetime.

The tumult hushed as by magic—and Hubert was going out, leaving the men infinitely crestfallen, when the gruff voice of a Clydeside engineman broke the silence.

"If ye please, doaktor, sneck doon the brake," he said. "We like to hear the tirlies gang *click* as we push through. It's a kind o' receipt that we hae payed our siller, ye see, doaktor. For a' the ithers hear it as weel!"

Followed the round of Thorsby applause. "Aw, he's richt!"

"Cannily spoken, Scotty! So 'tis!" And the

local preacher of the Primitives, a new body in Thorsby, quoted *apropos*: "He that entereth not in by the door, but climbeth in some other way . . . the same is a thief and a robber!"

And so the practice of Dunham Corner surgery continued to be conducted on purely conservative lines, whatever Dr. Budden might say to the contrary.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE NEW ASSISTANT

IT was a great source of difficulty for Hubert and Edith to discover where to go in the country. Mr. T. O. Larkins arrived—a tall, lanky youth, dark as a Spaniard, with a passion for work, and youthful enthusiasm glowing in his deep-set, sloe-black eyes. Hubert was pleased with him; and the report which followed him over from East Dene, that he was a quite remarkable boxer, did him no harm among the rough Thorsby lads.

"Better go easy! He can mash ye an' he can mend ye!" said the secretary of the local "Hand-of-Labour Gymnastic Club" to his committee.

"He don't gradely look it," said a boiler-maker. "I would just be fond to get a swipe at him!"

All the same, it was evident that Hubert had found a capable assistant. Edith told Hubert how much he could afford to give him in addition to bed and board. She had previously inquired from her friend, Dr. Growling, how much would be expected.

"We shall need to go easy this year, Hubert," she said one night, with her eyes on her account-books.

"Why, I thought we were away ahead!" cried Hubert. "I'm sure the cash comes rolling in, and no bad debts! I hear it clink all day!"

"I shall cost you such a lot—going out of town and that," she murmured, her face flushing.

"Well, dear," said Hubert, "we will go to some cheap place."

But a cheap place with health thereto, near enough to the corner surgery, was not easily found. Of all

people in the world, it was Mrs. Waddleham, the licensed opposition of the O.C.C., who put them on the track. Now Mrs. Waddleham was the widow of a champion boxer (who died suddenly owing to running against something). She was accounted rich. But she liked to buy medical advice in the cheapest market as well as her neighbours. Besides, she had heard so much against the new Salveson establishment, that she determined to go and see for herself. She had a whitlow, which Hubert miraculously cured, and two shillings was the whole cost, including dressing and unguents.

"Never a word," she boasted afterwards to the very hostile cap-bows and tinkling jet ornaments of Aunt Kidson; "no nasty bills comin' in just when you have to pay your taxes. If you want advice, you pay your shillin'—I might 'a made it a 'tanner,' all bein' left to your honour; but I'm an honest woman, Miss Fly—and **I**" (an immense I) "owe neither man nor wumman anything. So in I popped my shillin'—my poor 'usband never havin' worked in the yard, though he lathered more nor half the men in it, and so, in a way, I might ha' made out that I belonged!"

Having borne this testimony, Mrs. Waddleham came often, bringing other lame dogs to the waiting-room, and acting as a very successful tout, entirely without salary. She liked being about, she said. There was always company.

On one of these occasions she happened to see Mrs. Hubert Salveson ("t' doctor's wife; the out-and-outer's daughter, ye knaw") passing through. She looked, and started. Then she rose hurriedly and followed. She begged Mrs. Salveson's pardon at the door of No. 3, Dunham Street; but would she forgive her for speaking a word with her? She was an old friend of the family, and indeed (here followed a mysterious hushed confabulation). The only words that reached any other ear than Edith's

were: "That's the place, for sure. Yea, for sure!"

Mrs. Waddleham did not conceal the fact that she was the "borned" sister of the late Jo Challoner, dead in prison—not as ever he were fit to be called by that honest name; not that she would speak ill o' the dead, but humbly, as to his face. Jo were never nowt but a blagyard, a liar, a thief, and an 'ippocrite! To which his own sister bore testimony in all tenderness for them as is gone and will no more return: *an' a good job too!*

The place Mrs. Waddleham had in her mind was no other than Green Lane station.

"Ye see," she said, "me an' the station-master, owd Bob Cossar, is related through my mother, as were a Cossar. And now that he has begun to fail a bit, I've gone out to take a kind o' care o' him. They are building him a new station; not afore it were time. And so as he's comfortable, Bob Cossar 'ave bought the cottage a bit back; you know, where they used to sell toffee to the Sunday sweethearters——"

Edith smiled and nodded.

"We know the place," she said. "Yes, I should like to go there."

Then with becks and wreathed smiles, with many quiverings of an exuberant bust, Mrs. Waddleham expressed her intention of taking care of Edith "like a mother."

To which followed another pause of nodding and whispering, ending with the words: "And then, you know, owd Doctor Growling lives just down by Plympton, the very next station; an' if there were need, why, Bob Cossar 'ud wire on that *tick-tack* machine o' his, and the boys at Plympton 'ud trolly down owd Doc. Growling on the new line, at any hour, night *or* day!"

So, then, the thing was arranged. Hubert got Tim to send down his cycle from the manor, and

announced his intention of riding out to Green Lane to inspect. But by some interference of Providence (or Mrs. Waddleham) Dr. Growling's carriage happened to come to the surgery door; and so Edith was compelled to bundle up hastily and go along too. Her last words to Howard Stanley were with regard to the mixing of the podophyllin pills. He always made them lumpy, it appeared, and Mr. Larkins was empowered to keep an eye on him. Also the house accounts, carefully made out by Howard's mother, and checked by Hubert, were to be brought out every week in order to be finally audited and approved.

But it was many a long day before Edith saw the black and gold turnstiles of her heart, or heard the merry sound of the clicking gear and the tripping silver coins, which made better music to her ears than the singing of all birds; because she had always been poor, and because, if Hubert had not her to look after him—well, the awful Unthinkable would certainly happen. He was no more fit to look after money, either to take it in or to pay it out, than a week-old kitten. Even now he was directed to take the receipts every day to Mr. Gilmerton, who good-naturedly had offered to count and give a receipt for the bag. Then all was to be carried in state to the bank on Saturdays, the pass-book made up, and everything submitted to Hubert's chief accountant at Green Lane. On these conditions, and no others, would she resign herself to stay away.

It was the earliest days of the bleak northerly spring—April long begun, yet no sign of it elsewhere than in the calendar. But at Green Lane every one tried to make Edith feel at home. Even Dr. Growling made out that to drive by Green Lane was not at all an uncommon way to his home at Plympton; but the muttered "language," cold-drawn between his clenched teeth, which his coach-

man addressed to the "buttons" by his side, was proof to the contrary.

The station-master came in beaming, more rubicund than ever with the buffeting of the rude moorland breezes, and the efforts he had been making to keep the surfacemen and platelayers to their tasks in the interests of the company.

"Ye hae comed in the nick o' time, mistress," he said. "They are layin' doon anither line frae Plympton, and the mess and fuss thae Englishers haud aboot it is juist past tellin'. They are makkin' me an auld man afore my time, I do declare. Guidwife, I wadna' be the waur o' a drap o' tea, if oor bonny wee leddy there will join us in a cup o' comfort!"

Dr. Growling had given his last directions to Mrs. Waddleham, with whom he seemed somehow strangely familiar, and had been whirled off by the Compton road to his home at Plympton. He told Edith that he would sometimes drop down by train, to see if all was as it ought to be, and to taste a drop of Mrs. Waddleham's excellent tea and oat cakes. Certainly his housekeeper could make him nothing nearly so tasty. They minded him of his student days.

Hubert and Edith occupied one end of a moorland cottage—a little sitting-room in front, with a good firm table and a couple of easy chairs, both uncomfortable enough, which Hubert promised himself to replace on the morrow. Little green mats sustained pottery jars, with "A Present from Portobello," and suchlike, upon them. There were also rows of strange whorled shells from distant shores, in which Edith pleased herself by imagining, during the hours when she lay listlessly with her head on the sofa pillows, that she heard the sough of the South Pacific surges, or the strange oily soothings of the China seas.

CHAPTER XLIV

HOME ON THE MOORLAND

NOW began a time in the existence of Hubert Salveson wholly new to him. He alone, of all who were about Edith, refused to believe that she was dangerously ill. He had known her so long, always radiantly healthful, always doing the work of a household, always bright, always unselfish, and—well, just his Edith.

It is a good custom of the profession that the wife of a medical man should have her own doctor. Her husband dwells too near, sees without background or perspective. The change from day to day is so slight, that to him even a grievous malady may seem nothing at all. So it was that Hubert, though permitting Dr. Growling to have his own way in the matter, while obeying the mandates (they were no less) of Mrs. Waddleham, dubbed them to his assistant Larkins "a couple of old wives." This he said, forgetting that even "old wives" have their uses.

At any rate it was good out there on the moorland. When the nights were dark and rainy, Hubert took his overcoat and umbrella to the Old Quay station, caught the 5.30 and was presently running along the top of the long line of newly scarred railroad, on which the navvies were ceasing work, to Green Lane station. He was often the only passenger, so unfrequented was the moorland about. Then, like the boy he was, Hubert would lean out of the window, and under the back-rushing ruddy skarrow of the mounting smoke, reddened by the

stoker's open door, he would note the white dot of the window in which his Edith would be sitting, wrapped in her shawl, listening for the train, waiting for him.

There—there—in that little quiet room was all his world. And Hubert's heart mounted and sang. He had no fear of death—none for her, none for himself. She was a little out of sorts—oh, so little, a mere bronchial cough, with complications of course, but such as he treated with success every day. These old family doctors made mountains out of every molehill.

And Edith, she had been waiting too, was waiting now. He smiled, for he knew that long ago she would have laid aside the book, of which the reading did not progress much; also certain private cypherings of her own, to wait and listen.

Quite a quarter of an hour ago, Station-Master Robert Cossar would have come to the small-paned window of the cottage, skipping across the hundred yards from the station-house "like a young 'un," all to give Edith the thrilling intelligence: "She's left Thorsby Central." A little after, watching the signal box towards Plympton, Bob Cossar would see the red change to green and the green to white. Then the little bell of the railway telegraph would thrill out its song: "*T-trrrr-rr-rrrr!*"

Then Station-Master Cossar, unable to leave his platform, would lean over the wooden rails, just by the place from which Hubert had drawn the spikes myriads of years ago, and, making a trumpet of his huge palms, proclaim in a voice of thunder to the waiting Mrs. Waddleham, "She's signalled! Gang ben an' tell her!"

"As if I was wanting to keep it to mysen!" said Mrs. Waddleham, with just indignation; "t'owd fool!"

Then the bright red would mount swiftly to Edith's face. She would look in the glass "to be

pretty for him." Yes, her hair was nice in front—the way he liked it.

A shrill whistle! The clack of the falling armature of the "near" signal which shut the 6.1 p.m. within Green Lane station, not to be permitted to disgorge till Hubert descended. Next, Edith would hear the slow gush of steam from the exhausts, the long, musical note of the train coming to a standstill, the slamming of doors. Now Bob Cossar would be lifting his hand. The guard's whistle blew shrill. The engine snorted, driving the wheels round like lightning to get a grip of the slippery rails, and then, slow and forceful, the train moved out, masterfully breasting what was left of Green Lane Common before rattling down to Clinton with steam shut off and brakes down.

A "click"—was it in her heart? A rush of cold air.

"Shut the door, quick. I never saw such a man!" from Mrs. Waddleham in the kitchen. And she had risen to—to take him. She had to stand thus a moment, waiting, lovely, breathing lightly, a red petal burning (she could feel it) on either cheek, her expectant hands a little forward. Mrs. Waddleham was strict about letting him come in to the snug parlour without taking off his damp overcoat and putting on his slippers.

Then—there he was. At last! It did not seem an occasion for crying, even a little! And perhaps Edith did not; but, she put down her head and hid her eyes for quite a while.

Sometimes, on the contrary, there was a rush of business at the surgery, after the men came out of the yard, and it was quite impossible to get away by that train. Nor was there another on that little-frequented local track till after ten.

On these occasions the boy in dark blue bound with lighter blue was despatched to the station with a message to Robert Cossar at Green Lane—doctors'

messages being passed (by managerial favour) over the Thorsby and Compton Junction Railway.

It would sometimes be eight or nine before Hubert could get clear, and then, with a heart glad and proud, he would light his bicycle lamp, throw a light green waterproof cape across his shoulders, and bend to the handles. How the long winking streets slipped behind him, the brilliant public, the washen pavements shining after the rain, or hard with black frost. Presently he was descending the long curves by the shore. Mongrel dogs barked about the house of the "fancier," that is to say dog-stealer, who dwelt in Edith's old home, Waterside Cottage. There beyond, dim beneath a drift of high naked boughs plaited against the sky, and defended by low-lying evergreens, he saw the Manor House. If there were a cloudy moon, he could see the window of the prodigal's chamber still white like a blind eye. On the ground floor, Aunt Kidson would be entertaining a select circle. There was his father's range of three windows, half the side of the house to himself. High above, niched against the sky, with only the gables and the tiles above him was Tim's den, two little low turtle backs of mellow light. Good old Tim! Ignorant Tim! Miserable Tim! Bachelor Tim!

Ah well, how little they all got out of life—how little they knew!

Cheered with this thought, Hubert breasted the long rise, the rain mostly in his face. In five minutes the manor was drowned beneath him in the river mists.

He had a pride in thus driving on and on, farther and farther from the old life that was so elaborately empty and naught, nearer and nearer to the bright eyes—ah, too bright!—and loving lips which were his Edith's.

Presently he went slower and slower as the slope increased. He saw only the rutted road streaming

back from the fierce jet of his "Ter-Lux" lantern like the waves of a colourless river. He splashed through a runnel, where the moor-water, ill-contained by the culvert, spread across the road. A long pull, but useful, for it let out his muscles after the confinement of the day. Also it seemed as if he were struggling to get to Edith—struggling and overcoming. Besides, all this made the little Station Cottage infinitely more comfortable, and he thought of the change and rough-towel rub down before tea, as something akin to heaven ; yet, distinctly, only so because Edith was there.

He never knew exactly how long the uphill struggle continued. It always seemed longer than all the rest of the journey. Yet it was but a few minutes at most. He had carried Baby Sue up there on his back and never winced when they went black-berrying, or merely to see the trains.

Suddenly as he rode Hubert seemed to heave himself up like a giant. The whole world fell away beneath him. He was the highest thing his eyes could see. He stood on top. The common spread away and away. The sky, mantled with cloud or merely monotonous with rain, was now obviously the sky—a lighter vault under which he scudded towards the broad white scar of Green Lane station. After a while, just when the dogs of Hutchin's farm barked, he could see the little full stop of the light in Edith's bedroom. She always put a candle there on nights when he was late, to tell him that she understood and was watching. It was all very childish and innocent. But I must record what this other child, the grave and busy doctor, did in return. For Edith's full stop, thus, (.), he gave her a colon (:). It was the era of little electric toys, and one of them served his purpose admirably. He had the tiny lamp pinned to his cap, the cord travelled inside his coat to the battery in his breast pocket. He twitched a handle and there were the two lights, one on his

cap and the other on his machine. Then Edith took away her light, as soon as she had seen the colon, and, after counting twenty slowly, she replaced it. Three times Hubert touched the little button, extinguishing and relighting in succession. This meant "All Well—Good Day!"

Then he smiled to himself and put on speed for the final burst.

Bairns' play, say you? Yes, but a little more than that!

CHAPTER XLV

MR. MANSON SMELLS SCOUNDREL

YES, a considerable deal more than that, as Hubert found one night. It was the first of May. But May has no vested rights in the north country and out on the open, east-looking moorlands. A little drift of Siberian or White Sea weather, spiraling down, had struck our islands first about the moors of Thorsby, and, as on the famous May-day of 1824, threatened to cover them with the drifted snow.

The night was not yet so very bad when Hubert started to go home. It was a little later than usual, because that day he had had a curious letter sent to Old Quay cottage, which Sue had brought to the surgery, and in the afternoon a yet more curious interview.

The letter told him that a recently formed syndicate was inclined to aid in the general well-being of Thorsby, and the extension of the docks by acquiring the right of landing at Old Quay, as well as by taking over all the lands, cottages, satisfying all existing rights and interests, with a view to building a pier worthy of the city, together with a floating landing-stage on the latest Mersey model. This syndicate would send its authorised representative, a lawyer in their confidence, to meet Dr. Salveson and inspect his title-deeds that very evening. It was most important that certain parties, whom it was useless to name, holding rights on either side of Old Quay should not be made aware of this proposal till the arrangement had somewhat matured.

Their lawyer, Mr. Abel Adcock, would accordingly call that evening on his way to London. It was hoped that Dr. Salveson would have the documents, in order that he and Mr. Adcock might study them together.

Hubert despatched the necessary telegram to his wife; and after showing the letter to his assistant, Mr. Larkins Theophilus Oglethorpe Larkins, M.B., B.Sc.Lond., Dr. Salveson went across to his father's lawyers, Messrs. Good, Manson and Manson, in St. Anne's Square. The Mr. Good of the firm slept with his fathers in St. Anne's churchyard, but Manson, senior, was at the service of the son of his old client. He thought no worse of him for the start he had made, and the struggle he was making to be and do something. He had even told the surgeon-general that his last will was a disgrace, and that only a sense of professional duty had made him draw it. It was in his safe that Hubert's father had deposited the three stout volumes, duly sealed and receipted for, which contained the late James Pritchard's private diary. With him also were the deeds and documents concerning the property at Old Quay willed to Hubert, his wife, and their heirs. Among these was the notable charter under which James Pritchard had so long waged successful war with the East Dene and Thorsby Ferry Company—being a deed of Crown property at Old Quay after the removal of the Customs' and Coastguards' station there.

Mr. Manson, a broad, bland, side-whiskered man, received the young doctor with surprise. Hubert had telephoned to know if it would be suitable, and the head of the firm had waited over at some slight inconvenience.

He perused the letter and looked grave.

"Yes, I think there is something behind that," he said. "The syndicate may be a real syndicate or it may not. There are several Adcocks on the Law

List, but no local man of that name. What would London people know about a place which most Thorsby folk have never seen themselves? Ah—hum—yes—the trap is baited, doubtless. The allusions to other interested parties point straight to Pritchard's and the Dock Board. If this is a third move, it is either the Ferry Company or—something extremely shy! I should very much like to see this Mr. Adcock, but the documents remain here. However, I can give you a *précis* if you wait a few minutes."

Then, after making some business arrangements, he asked Hubert to partake of the hasty dinner which he sent out for. They would go along and meet Mr. Adcock.

"It will be better that the interview should take place in your surgery. Keep Larkins with you. You can trust him, I suppose? Oh, one of the Oglethorpe lot—that's all right—Radicals, but good family. I shall stay in the ante-room with a casual patient or two. I have spoken to my head clerk. Then Mr. Adcock will have a chance of being recognised."

As Mr. Manson planned, so it was done. They ate. They took their way through the thin, driving sleety snow, the lawyer pronouncing ever deeper anathema on the climate of Thorsby which made May even as December.

They had not long to wait. The gentleman went first to the Dunham Street door; but Mrs. Stanley, with Howard open-mouthed behind her, explained that the doctor was still in his surgery, and Howard was good enough to conduct and announce the visitor.

"You see, sir," he said sagely, "you couldn't get through them turnstiles without paying your tanner at least! What name, sir?"

"Adcock," said a hoarse voice—"out of his boots," as Howard described it afterwards. The man wore

a great-coat on account of the night, also a large "comforter" like a small Paisley shawl wound about his throat. He was a powerful, rather foreign-looking man, and he scanned the waiters in the ante-room carefully.

"Casuals!" said Howard Stanley, with a wearied air. "Now, why didn't you come earlier? You know very well that the doctor doesn't see people after his hours except by happointment! This way, sir. I'll show you the trick!" And with a clever "up-and-over" vault, Master Howard got behind the barrier, lifted the gearing lever, and swung the shilling gate open for the visitor, on the strength of his fur-lined overcoat and the sixpence he expected, but failed to get.

"'Ee says 'is name is Adcock!" was the actual announcement. Sixpence would have made it "Mr. Hadcock, doctor!" which, considered merely as an investment in self-respect, would certainly have been cheap at the price.

Never in his life could Mr. Adcock have run the gauntlet of such a keen array of eyes. Yet he baffled them all.

"He looks a curious professional man," confided Mr. Manson to his first clerk; "but he may be a colonial, or a German Jew who has qualified. These Hamburg companies are looking up our local investments!"

"Looks a regular bargee!" murmured the head clerk. The second clerk stretched his legs and reserved his opinion.

Inside Hubert introduced his assistant, and informed his visitor that he was prepared to listen.

"You have the title-deeds?—all the papers?" queried Mr. Adcock.

"I have just been looking them over," said Hubert, putting his hand in his breast pocket.

"Ah," said the man, "that is what I should like to do—what I am here for."

"All in good time," said Hubert. "In the meantime, what does your syndicate propose?"

"To buy out and out," answered Mr. Adcock; "we will give you twenty thousand pounds!"

Hubert was staggered, and looked it.

"Yes," continued Mr. Adcock; "but naturally we want to be as sure of your rights as you will be of our money."

"And *vice-versâ*," put in Hubert, who had gone to school to Edith.

"Naturally," said the man. "You have got them with you?"

"I cannot do anything without consulting my wife. She is out of town," said Hubert, "but I shall be at your service to-morrow at three, with all the papers."

"Well, good-night, then. It is no use taking up your time. I shall call at three." Mr. Adcock was all at once in a vast hurry.

And before Hubert had time to open out the roll of legal documents, which contained the *précis* of the various grants and deeds, Mr. Adcock had shouldered his way past the astonished Howard Stanley, strode before the patient waiters in the ante-room, and was lost in the whirl of the storm.

"Well, what do you think, sir?" Hubert asked Mr. Manson, as he thrust the roll into his breast pocket, and buttoned his coat up to the neck.

"I smell scoundrel!" said the old lawyer. "I'll be with you at three, Hubert, and between us we will track him; perhaps even trap him!"

CHAPTER XLVI

THE WIRE ENTANGLEMENT

IN the house under the lee of the big railway embankment Edith abode. She had been unusually well that day. But after the arrival of the train, and before the telegram arrived, she had shown herself strangely unquiet.

Long before there was any chance of Hubert's coming she had left the sitting-room, in spite of the prayers of Mrs. Waddleham, and had camped with her hand-lamp in the bedroom, in spite of the fact that the night had fallen chill and frosty upon the grey tinting of the snow, sifted sparsely over the rough face of the moorland.

She could see the weird loom of Thorsby lights in the dull sky. Sometimes when she looked at them long, they used to pulse zenithwards like northern lights.

"May-day," she murmured, "May-day and snow! Oh, I wish he were home to me!"

A nervousness, the like of which she had never experienced, shook her like a fever, yet so coldly that her teeth chattered. Mrs. Waddleham besought her to "come ben" to the fire. But Edith pushed her away, shading her face from the glare of the lamp in the window-nook, so that she might catch the first glint of Hubert's arrival.

She had long to wait. The unwonted pepper-and-salt aspect of the desolate moor made it more difficult to make things out. Pieces of gashed peat-brow, unnoticed by day, sunk in the general grey and brown of the uneven surface, now appeared

black, like horrible wounds. The road by which Hubert must come was, however, somewhat plainer. The slight snowdrift, earlier in the evening, had not held there, and it was clean-swept, a black undulating serpent flung like a whip-lash across the desolation of the common.

It was wellnigh ten o'clock when at last, with a glad cry that brought Mrs. Waddleham to her side, she made out Hubert's light. He was riding slowly, as if wearied, and her heart went out to him in pitifulness. She had missed him somehow on the brow of the common, deceived, perhaps, by the pulsing glimmer in the sky and the unwonted snow below.

But he was nearer. Edith looked forth eagerly, stilling her heart with her hand. There—she took away the light, hiding it behind the curtain, and again put it back—there—he had lighted the electric light in his cap. Once! Twice! He was on the plain home-track now. She waited for the third. It did not come! Both stars, that of his cap and the front light of his bicycle, vanished. But not, to Edith's strained eyes, as if they had extinguished. Rather it seemed to her that some accident had happened. She had seen them fall to the earth as the trail of a spent firework does.

Something had happened, she was sure! Hubert was hurt; oh, she must go to him!

She rose, and drew her shawl about her. Mrs. Waddleham sought in vain to comfort her.

"The lad's aw richt, hinny," she murmured, her rough tongue for once modulated to a strange tenderness, "he'll hae comed on a bit o' broken bottle wi' that daft fleein' wheel o' his! There were some Geordies gaed by this mornin' to the station, and Geordies are just awesome for flingin' bottles aboot!"

But Edith was not to be thus appeased. An accident had happened to her Hubert. Mrs. Waddleham must do something—quickly, oh, so

quickly—go for the station-master—tell the odd signalman at the next cottage!

"But Bob Cossar can none leave the station till the ten-thirteen is through, and she's not so much as signalled yet," objected Mrs. Waddleham, "and as for the signalman, he will be in his first sleep, and a wild man he would be to be awakened——"

"Then if you will not, I will," cried Edith, staring wildly about for some weapon wherewith to defend her Hubert from deadly peril.

So strange was her look, that Mrs. Waddleham, fearing a misfortune, hastened to draw a shawl about her own grey head.

"I'll gang; I'll gang, hinny; I'll do your biddin'. Only bide ye there by the fire, and keep yoursel' warm, like a denty wife!"

Mrs. Waddleham betook herself first to the signalman's cottage. The awakened victim, in his rough fashion and from his bed, consigned her for a troublesome old hag to various places mentioned in Scripture. But at talk like that the Waddleham had easily the top grip. And so grumblingly the signalman rose and drew on his trousers, doing his objecting between his teeth, and calling out: "Waken Jimmy Gash, the surfaceman. He'll be pleased, I'll wager!"

The which Mrs. Waddleham did, and then, leaving the surfaceman expressing the belief that it was "a dorg's world," gave a cry up to Bob Cossar, waiting for the ten-thirteen on the station platform.

"He is as likely as not to come by that," said the station-master, firm in his faith that all things arrive by train; "and what the lassie saw on the muir was verra like nocht but a stravagin' pitman lichtin' his pipe!"

Mrs. Waddleham hastened back to lead the party in person, for rendezvous had been given at her door. She looked within to reassure "the puir lass"; but neither in the little parlour, nor in the

lesser back bedroom was Edith to be found. The lamp was still shining out of the window across the streaked stubble and snow; but her charge had vanished. Mrs. Waddleham rushed this way and that. She climbed the little wooden staircase. She set her head through the skylight, and got the wind of the frosty night chill on her brow. Edith was gone. She called, but Edith did not reply.

It was evident that with the secretiveness common to women at such times, sick, and waiting for the thing that shall be, Edith had simply fled out at the open door as soon as Mrs. Waddleham's back was turned.

The tenderness of that good lady for a moment turned to anger.

"Oh, if only she was a bairn—and weel!" she murmured, "I would learn her!" And with the pitifulness of apprehension there mingled incongruous thoughts of slippers with capable heels and double soles.

Meantime the surfaceman was at the door, and with a grand *rooo-oooo-oop* of grinding brakes, and a pyrotechnic display of sparks, the ten-thirteen drew up within the station.

They heard a noise of shouting, singing, and good fellowship of the spirituous sort—Geordies without a doubt!

"Is he there?" Mrs. Waddleham called to Bob Cossar.

"Give up yer tikkutts; give up yer tikkutts! Naw, I see you; ye are no gaun to slip by! Ye hae lost it? Aweel, then, pay your fare. Saxpence! Oot wi' it noo!"

"*Right, guard!*"

Again the shrill whistle, acknowledged shortly by the engine. All clear! And the ten-thirteen, become the ten-fifteen, steamed away to Clinton.

"Is he come, the doctor; answer, ye stuped auld man?"

Mrs. Waddleham was on the warpath.

"I'm comin' to help," said the station-master, "bide till I turn the keys, and get this deevil's lot through the yett! Naw, he's no come!"

"Could ye no hae said that at first, Bob Cossar?" demanded the irate lady. "She's gane hersen—aye, she's away to seek her man! God kens where!"

The Geordies (or pitmen from the Long Loan pit across the moor) being more noisy than drunk eagerly agreed to assist. That was an excellent thing, for, being used to the semi-darkness, they beat the surface of the moor on either side the track, while on the road itself the portly form of the station-master, at last released from duty, oscillated from side to side carrying the station lantern. The surfaceman had a little lamp of his own, which he had stopped to light. Mrs. Waddleham shouted, and encouraged the searchers generally.

They had reached a spot, from a quarter to half a mile from Green Lane, a place where there is a little dip in the level moorland, when suddenly Bob Cossar's lantern was seen to pitch forward, and that portly man's hoarse bellow came from the ground: "Here, lads, haste ye! There's something unhandy here! Mind where ye are comin', you Geordies, wi' your big, clambersome feet!"

For a moment all the world of Green Lane Common believed in a grave accident. The first of the pitmen went floundering—then another, and another. And it was not till the surfaceman came up with his relighted lantern that it became apparent that a wire had been drawn tight across the road about eighteen inches from the ground.

"The murderous lowns!" cried Bob Cossar. "Help me up, lads!" Then it was seen that he and the three pitmen were floundering amid the ruins of a bicycle.

"That's the doctor's Beeston, wi' the high gear. He was a deevil to ride!" said the station-master, as he picked a broken wheel-spoke tenderly out of the calf of his leg.

Of Hubert, however, nothing could be seen

The pitmen straggled like so many fox-hounds thrown out. But Bob Cossar and the surfaceman uniting their forces and their lights circled the scene of the attempt or accident. There was no fence of any sort on either side, so they could not look for a break in it, while with the sudden-falling frost the surface was hard. But in a little depression the drifted "scuff" of thin snow had been disturbed. Something heavy had been dragged that way. They followed like sleuth-hounds, while Mrs. Waddleham moaned behind.

"Oh, the poor lass; the poor, poor lass! Never, never did I happen on the like!"

Finally station-master and surfaceman stood on an eminence, and Bob Cossar taking both lamps and holding them high above his head revolved with them, while the younger man, having the better eyes, shaded his face, and peered in every direction.

He seemed to catch a glimmer of something white in a deep "clough," or, more exactly, moss-bag.

"Yonder!" he cried. And they followed the direction of his hand, taking heed to their going.

The searchers climbed the little hill of bent and burned stubble of heath. They shed the light of their lanterns over the verge.

A woman sat beneath, holding a man's head in her lap—Edith and Hubert without a doubt.

"They have killed him, my Hubert, that never did a wrong!" she moaned.

And at the first sound of Edith's complaint Mrs. Waddleham flung herself broadcast athwart the moor, calling out at the pitch of her voice, "Oh, Ede Dillam, ye traipsin' besom; what think ye will

happen to ye? Ye hae brak ma hert, that ye hev', this weary nicht! Wait till I come to ye, oh, ye besom!"

And that is the sole occasion when our Edith was called "Dillam" in the course of this history.

But by the time that the briefly angry Waddleham had reached her patient, Edith had quietly fainted, and the good old lady, restraining her rough tongue, bent over her with murmurs of maternal tenderness.

Hubert received the cares of the men, expert in wounds and bruises. He had a severe contusion on his forehead, where he had struck the road. The palms of his hands were scratched and bleeding. His coat had been ripped from the lining. All his possessions were scattered about—his medical case of knives, scissors, and forceps. The green waterproof dressing had been unfolded. The lint torn, while one of the pitmen picked up the doctor's watch and chain, which had been flung to a distance as if in anger. It was still ticking away, no whit the worse. But not a scrap of letter or paper had been left—even his writing-pad for notes and prescriptions had been taken.

They rubbed Hubert's face with snow, and slapped the palms of his hands in their rude, efficient way. After a while he sat up dully, not seeing Edith, and muttering dreamily to himself.

"It was for the deeds—aha, I hadn't got them! And I'm sure I smelt chloroform!"

The saying was Greek to his audience, who merely thought that he had not quite come to himself. The station-master, called by Mrs. Waddleham, left Hubert in the charge of the surfaceman, whispering to the latter to stand between the doctor and his wife. For Hubert was still dropping off to sleep every other moment, and quite unable to realise anything.

Then at a whisper from the Waddleham he com-

manded the "Geordies," all now sober as judges, and brave lads accustomed to danger, to range up.

"Let me have a look at ye!" he said. "Ah, Lang Loan men; weel, then, you young ones, go and clear awa' that wire across the road. Aff wi' ye! And you" (here he named the elder men of family), "to wit, Dick Scratton, Tom Kemp, Jo Little, Billy Little, Evan Williams from Cardiff, and the Scotty frae Fife that I kenna the name o'—you six, plait your hands and mak' a carryin' creel for the poor lass. And mind ye, canny—canny, as if she was made o' lamp-glass! Or else I, auld Bob Cossar, will break every bane in your worthless bodies!"

"Never fear, station-maister," said Dick Scratton, "mony's the poor lad we hae carried oop ladders, an' aw; what will it be alang the plain road wi' a licht weight? The lass will be as good as in her bed!"

And so, squired and directed by Mrs. Waddleham on one side, and with an odd pitman holding the station-master's lantern on the other, Edith was carried home, tenderly, daintily, without a jar or movement, as only these rough fellows, trained to hospital duty in the deeps and levels of a colliery, know how. They did not heed the Waddleham, who abused them steadily as if they had been pick-pockets, save for an occasional: "Cannily, goodwife, cannily wi' thy tongue; happen tha' wilt wake her! And 'tis better we should get her hoam first!"

Otherwise they talked in strange miner's speech, pattering almost inaudibly to each other about how this one was to "ease," and that other to "howd firm," the whole six moving of a piece, yet as elastic as a surgical knee-bandage, till finally they laid her on her white bed, above which the abandoned lamp still burned.

Then they left her with the maternal Waddleham —left promptly and without thanks, too—because that lady ordered them out! And they went like

whipped curs, although they had done what perhaps no other men in the world could have done so well; such being the nature of a "Geordie."

They plodded back to help bring in "the doctor," speaking little, offering no theories like other men in their position. Trained pitmen every one, men who had mastered the first elements of this world's practical philosophy, which are, that misfortune is bound to fall; that, when it falls, it has to be remedied; and that, if it cannot be remedied, it must be borne. With the Geordie there is no use disputing about causes so long as there is anything to be done.

Hubert had again gone to sleep. He was a little sick, and seemed under the influence of some drug. The station-master and the surfaceman discussed the "robbery"; the latter, a mouthy man, was inclined to call it an "attempted assassination." But Dick Scratton, who was a gang foreman at Lang Loan, and understood head contusions, cut away part of the doctor's hair with the doctor's own scissors, melted a little snow over the lamp flame, washed the wound, and with the medical stores scattered about the moss-bags, achieved a very decent wet dressing.

Then they took Hubert home, still muttering vaguely and twitching in every limb. Even as they had borne his wife, so they carried him, making no more of the burden than of lighting their pipes. Fine, brave lads, who knew that life and death stand close together, and that they and every man are elbow to elbow with both all their lives!

"Now," said Dick Scratton, as they wiped their brows outside the little cottage, "if we ha' done all that we mainly can do, we 'ud better be trackin' ower yond by to Lang Loan; for there be some o' us as have to be on the early shift the morn, and we don't none o' us want to be docked o' our dues. No, thank ye, station-maister; yo're main kind, but the drop o' drink will stand for another time. We've

aw had our lawfu' skinful this nicht! Tramp, lads, and good-night to yo!"

"Good-night!" cried the station-master, "I maun gang and licht up again. I hae a telegram to send!"

. . . . . .

Hubert had the dreary, strange, unhaltered night of one who has taken an overdose of chloroform. He wandered through vast spaces. He saw great landscapes, thick with fortresses and loud with the boom of bursting shells. Red fires burnt about him, pulsating with the promise of the coming end of all things, concerning which his father had instructed him in his boyhood. At times he could hear himself laughing; at others weeping like a woman. He wondered why he did it. Then he would laugh to himself again, and bury his head in the pillow, moving his bandaged hands slightly, for he was running on air, soaring higher than the highest bird; at home among strange creatures, angels with stars on their heads, gods and demigods taking tea together round golden boards; while Edith—his Edith—in a coster's coat and pale blue skirt, with large crown-piece buttons arranged in two rows down the front, sold to the feasting presences winkles out of a barrow inscribed:

"*H. E. Salveson & Co., Licensed Costermongers, Olympus.*"

It was a green barrow, and Hubert remembered resolving that the very next day he would have a line of gold put along the shafts and all round the panels. There was no donkey. You just spoke to the barrow, and it went by itself!

But while he was going forward to help Edith, something came with a soft hush, like sand sliding in a pit. And lo! he seemed to awake the very next moment in a new world. The sun was shining. He was lying on a soft bed. And somewhere near—oh, very near; thrilling his heart as it had never been thrilled before—he heard a young child crying!

CHAPTER XLVII

"I FOUND YOU"

HUBERT had a great leap of the blood, like to none he had ever known. Also he was afraid with a deadly fear. He strove to rise, but big, soft, gentle hands held him down, and Dr. Growling stooped over him with a "Keep quiet—all right—a boy!"

"I don't care about the boy. Edith?—How's Edith?"

"*H-s-s-s-sh!*" Growling moved his hand with the thumb towards the wall, murmuring, "Low, but improving. We'll pull her through. Lie still, you've had a bad accident, you know. Gibson from East Dene is here. He was with me to dinner. They trollied us down on a flat bogey! Now, ask no more questions. Go to sleep."

Hubert wanted to get up immediately and go to Edith. Then he wanted to cry, because he was weak and couldn't; because they would not let him; but instead he went to sleep, still with that fine, thin, clear-cut bell-note ringing through the eternities, the first-born's voice, which a man hears but once in his life. And hearing it Hubert went to sleep.

When he awoke it was the afternoon. His head buzzed. He was all one ache. Looking carefully the Waddleham saw him stir. Then she approached the sofa with a swathed bundle. He saw a pinched red patch, something like frost-bitten knuckles, in the middle of the white wrappings. And that was his son! Hubert felt none of the emotion of the first "keening" cry which announced the old life past,

and all become new for him. He wanted to see Edith. But his medical experience saved him from open disgrace. He admired the babe, which, according to Mrs. Waddleham, was the finest, and loveliest, and the heaviest her ample experience had ever known.

Hubert was willing to take these statements on trust; but—could he see Edith? Mrs. Waddleham, less sympathetic, said that she would see what Dr. Growling would say. But she did not think—— he had had a shake, he must remember Mrs. Salveson (that ever she should come to call Edith Dillingham by such a name!) was doing well, but weak—not to be disturbed at present.

The doctor came in, and insisted on "going over" Hubert before he would even consider the question of an interview.

"There's nothing I can see that won't mend of itself," he said; "but you will have a lot of questions to answer. There are two police detectives down there now, waiting till I give the word."

"Let them wait; I want to see Edith!"

"Fair and soft, young man," said Dr. Horace Growling; "pray be good enough to remember that you are speaking to a man who has trollied down here on a flat board last night five minutes after he had got ready for bed. Gibson? Oh, he's gone. He had his work at East Dene. But I'm to wire him how things go. The Company has put its staff at my disposition; that's what it is to have a grandfather a director!"

"A what? director who?" demanded Hubert.

"The surgeon-general, your father!" chuckled Dr. Growling. "He's a grandfather now, isn't he? I wonder if that will wean his tough old heart from the tenth beast and the sixteenth flying dragon?—or whatever the thing is. I've sent him a note at any rate, duly signed, Horace Growling, M.D., to certify to the fact."

"Written to my father?" said Hubert "Why?"

"Because he is my old comrade, and because I believe there's a few sensible chinks left in his head yet."

"You are very kind, doctor," said Hubert; "but I see you are trying to put me off. I want to see Edith. If I can't, I shall know that she is much worse than you are willing to tell me."

"As her medical adviser I ought to say no. As a man—well, can you walk across that floor? Let's see!"

Hubert staggered up, drew his dressing-gown about him and took a few tottery steps.

"I feel curiously light-headed—sick, too!" He sniffed. "I taste ether or chloroform. You've not been giving me that, have you?"

"No," said Dr. Horace Growling, emphatically; "but some person or persons unknown, in search of a certain article or articles unknown, dosed you with as much as would have killed an ordinary man. I suppose the breezes of Green Lane Common helped to carry it off, or else you have a jolly strong head, Salveson. Your father used to have. Gay dog, your father!"

"Should never have suspected it," said his son; "but, about Edith; I want to see her, you know. I'm going to—now!"

"Let me see you draw on your trousers; ah, I thought so!" He caught Hubert as he pitched forward. "Now, perhaps, you'll take an old fellow's word for it next time. Lie down. Take a drop of this. Now, let me help you. You won't? Well, then of course you don't want to see your wife! So, lad, so!"

Hubert was left alone while the doctor temporarily withdrew. The young man listened carefully, but only a whistle from the railway and the distant creaking of the wires and pulleys of the home-signals reached his ear.

Dr. Growling came back. He tucked the bandaging on Hubert's head under a rough wide cycling cap, and drew his own great bears' paws of lined gloves over his bandaged hands.

"Now be sensible—as you know how. Don't talk much. No emotion! Or, if any, keep it to yourself. You two youngsters have a steep hill before you. Don't handicap the little girl at the bottom. She's a brick."

They went in, Hubert balancing himself behind the doctor. His head was spinning, and the floor and ceiling undulating and swaying like so much sailcloth.

The little bed had been shifted into the parlour, and on the far side of it stood Mrs. Waddleham, as it seemed to Hubert, hard, determined and hostile. She was downright opposed to it, so she was, as she had let Doc. Growling know. But, o' course, them family doctors always thought they knew best.

On the bed lay Edith—another Edith.

So pale, so frail, so young; her babe nestled in the hollow of her arm! She smiled wanly up at him. She made the motherly little lip-pout which meant "*He* is asleep!" Then with the other arm she gathered her husband close. Hubert bit his lip to keep from groaning, as he knelt beside the bed.

Edith drew his ear close to her lips.

"I found you!" she whispered triumphantly. Then she pushed him back to look at him.

"You are not hurt?" she queried. Hubert shook his head.

"Nothing to speak of," he said. "Oh, you brave girl!"

Warned by something in the eye of Mrs. Waddleham, he rose painfully.

"Stay by me a little—only a little," she pleaded. "Oh, let him!"

"Ye are to gae to sleep, hinny," murmured the

Waddleham, bending over. "Let him gang his ways!"

Edith's eyes prayed.

"Let him sit a little while, only a little—by me—here on the chair, that I may be sure! *You* can take baby!"

Mrs. Waddleham flounced into the back room with the despised first-born, to whom both Edith and Hubert had now become mere auxiliaries.

Dr. Growling turned his back and looked out of the window at the long line of the station buildings, ending with the seldom-used goods shed, in which Bob Cossar stored his "plants" in a backward season, set out in empty cube sugar boxes. He studied the empty trolly on which he had been "run down" so expeditiously and unceremoniously the night before.

He did not see and he tried not to listen. What had a bachelor to do with such things?

"You are to go to sleep, Edith," said Hubert.

"I would rather look at you."

"But you must!"

"Give me your hand then, not in those gloves; no, I want it. Ah, you are hurt——"

Dr. Growling turned and spoke sharply.

"Mrs. Salveson," he said, "if you do not instantly compose yourself to sleep, I will send your husband away. His knuckles are a little scratched, that is all."

Edith's eyes filled with tears. They became wells of blueness. She put out both of hers and clasped Hubert's bandaged fingers—like a couple of babies.

"Poor hand," she said, and again, "poor hand!"

A vague snort, half-gasp, half-sob escaped Hubert, in spite of himself, and in spite also of the disapproving eye of Dr. Horace Growling. But it had instantly the effect of changing Edith's mood.

"I *will* be good," she said, like a child. She turned her face towards his upon the pillow,

beckoning him nearer with her eyes. "Kiss me, and say you love me, and I will go to sleep!"

Hubert laid his lips a moment to hers—little cold lips, still a little drawn—and murmured his love.

"*Now* I will sleep!" she said, with the hurt hand between both of hers, and in five minutes she was breathing tranquilly.

CHAPTER XLVIII

RECONCILIATION

LITTLE us would it serve to tell in detail all that followed—the marches and traps of the police to lay hands upon Hubert's assailants—the utter disappearance of Mr. Adcock, and the failure of the local firms to discover him among the gentlemen of that name on the Law List. Nor yet how Mrs. Dillingham strove with the Waddleham, and the Waddleham had the mastery — possession counting ten points as against blood and kindred. Besides which, Mrs. Dillingham had to be back every evening at Old Quay House to relieve Captain Leafy's watch on deck. The history of the subsequent compromise need not be more than indicated: how that the babe was to be jointly used, bathed and dressed at least once during the three hours that Mrs. Dillingham passed at Green Lane—tepid water and terebine soap being the happy grandmother's specific, warm water and "yaller" soap that of the Waddleham.

Neither can the historian relate in detail how the out-and-outer came every evening by the six train and tramped it home, a stout cudgel in hand. Or how he was found by his son Will on his knees, and how, on being charged with praying (it was about the tenth day and Edith very feverish), he affirmed first that he was looking for something he had lost, and, secondly, that if he, Mr. William Dillingham, desired to retain one inch of consecutive hide on his body, he had better keep his head shut, and refrain from saying anything about the matter

in the yard. Which thing, in the true spirit of the fifth commandment, that "with promise," Master Will duly did.

Nor can Miss Sue's impressions of "our Ede's baby" be more than adverted to. Agnes Anne Jacox was informed that it was "the beautifullest, the darlingest, the sweetest thing in the world, that its hair parted down the middle and curled naturally, that it knew its only auntie, that when it smiled it was like heaven, and that it was going to be christened Lucien Augustus de Vere—all which statements were more or less untrue.

In the secrecy of her own heart Sue considered the babe more than usually "red and peely." She even felt uncomfortable and "moppy" whenever she was forced to go near it. It squalled, out of *malice prepense*, as often as she laid hold of it, but quieted at once when they laid it besides its mother, a flagrant piece of hypocrisy—as if it knew!

These things we must leave, in order to record the gradual convalescence of Edith, and the complete recovery of Hubert, who was soon back again at the surgery; a little disappointed perhaps to find that Larkins had increased the receipts, and that the whole had not gone to rack and ruin during his absence.

Mr. Manson received him mysteriously, and asked for any further information as to his assailant. He thought that in time the authorities would be able to trace the culprit.

"Not that you will be able to get at him even then," he said. "But, as you don't want to be bothered with business during the illness of your wife, and as (to tell the truth) you are but ill-fitted for transacting it, you had better give me such a power of attorney as will enable me to deal with parties at first hand."

"Parties? What parties?" Hubert asked innocently, who had been brought up in the belief that the word, so used, was bad English.

" There are offers from three parties for the rights of the Old Quay Landing, including the right of way," said the lawyer. " We must lay up something in the stocking-foot for the little man."

When Hubert got home that night he was not at all astonished to find Dr. Growling's carriage at the door, but on entering the parlour, he tripped over the bassinette in his alarm at finding his father sitting calmly by Edith's side, and—holding her hand. It might have been to feel her pulse. The medical profession has its obvious advantages. But the fact cannot be denied.

" Father ! " said Hubert, with a gasp.

The surgeon-general rose slowly, carefully keeping Edith's hand in his own left, and offered his right to his son. They shook hands. And that was all that there ever was about the matter.

" I want to know when the christening is ? " said the grandfather. " Horace brought me—Growling you know. Oh, Saturday ! I will come out. And pray, what do you think of calling the child ? "

" Edward Charles Heathcote, sir," said Hubert, very quickly.

" And why Edward ? " asked the surgeon-general.

" After my father-in-law," said Hubert with a certain concision of accent.

And for another of the recorded times in this history Salveson temper met Salveson temper as Greek meets Greek. And the younger won the tug of war.

" Ah ! " said the surgeon-general, " yes, of course ! "

And Edith, looking at him, thought the old man seemed rather bored in expression, and did not at all realise that he had done one of the most Christian actions of his life, in allowing his son to prefer the out-and-outer to himself.

On Saturday he drove out with Mr. Marchbanks

in the family chaise and a hired pair. He even shook hands with Mr. Edward Dillingham, and forbore to sneer at the simple Presbyterian rite. He drew from under his overcoat, left in the carriage, a solid silver mug, which might with advantage have been used as a font. It had dints in it, and was worn smooth in places. Generations of Salvesons of the Manor had drunk from it their daily milk. It had been bumped and thumped on unnumbered nursery tables, tumbled and dinted and abased. There were many names upon it, beginning with the scarcely legible "RUPERT CHARLES SALVESON 1683," and ending with "EDWARD CHARLES HEATHCOTE SALVESON," with the current day and date.

This was a great thing for the student of prophecy to perform. "Better," saith the Wise Man, "is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

And so far, which was as far as dissonant spirits can be at once, Hubert Salveson was reconciled to his father.

. . . . . .

Then began the sweetest time of their lives, as Hubert now remembers it. The Waddleham refused to allow any alien hand to touch the sacred person of Edward Charles Heathcote, but had graciously permitted a young Cossar, niece to Rob at the station, to be sent for from Borgue parish to do some good plain cooking under her supervision.

Their year had worked out handsomely, and Hubert had much increased Mr. Larkins' honorarium, so that, in the days of his own happiness he might not have the surgery continually on his mind. The young dispenser, too, proved an intelligent youth, and could be trusted to prescribe for toothaches and the results of Easter-Monday.

Edith had books from the library which Hubert brought her, returning either by the 3.30 or by the 6.10 p.m. trains, generally by the former. But I am not sure that at this time Edith read much. That

came later. She was content. She drowsed away the morning, waking to watch the light wind sway the fuchsias and calceolarias that her mother had brought her, sometimes pressing a leaf of the scented verbena between her fingers and gratefully taking in the expressed tenderness of the smell.

Bob Cossar had fixed a full sheet time-table of all the trains above her couch, annotated with the passages of the goods trains. He even added the known "empties" and "construction" trains, on a little daily codicil, which the old station-master remade with care every morning at breakfast time. He was under the impression that Edith, having time on her hands, would naturally occupy herself with what was the most interesting thing in the world to himself—the to's and fro's of the Green Lane railway traffic.

But Edith, though she did not tell the old man, liked rather to take things as they came. There was baby. She was little favoured with his society in the forenoon, the young gentleman having a liking for heavy meals and infinite sleep. Also as soon as he cried, Nurse Waddleham (death to the man who so miscalled her!) would snatch him away from the cosy niche into which he had been snuggled, hang him like a limp rag over the crook of one elbow, and smack him into peace with the other hand locally applied. Edith could not do that. She handled master baby like fine china, the Waddleham like a bolster. But the victim himself obviously preferred the rougher treatment.

Then Edith would dress slowly, reading snatches of Hubert's books as she did her hair, and wishing that she were clever. But nothing very connected. After that Edward Charles was in his "pram" and being pushed to and fro in the sunshine, Edith took the white parasol Hubert had given her and went out. The high spacious airs of the moorland fanned her cheeks. Rarely, almost never, did the

smoke of the great riverside cities blow their way. Edith made her way to Hubert's corner—their corner, and watched dreamily the trains go clanking by. She asked Bessy Cossar from Borgue to fetch out her chair, and by-and-by the station-master came along and installed her still more comfortably under the little clump of firs.

Sometimes they brought her dinner out to her there. For Hubert and she stuck to tea and supper —very little supper so far as Edith was concerned.

Then, soon after, because the day went fast, came the great question of the twenty-four hours. Edith crossed the line by the new white wooden bridge, which was her test of strength. She took a long time to it; sitting and resting on this step and that. Finally she gained the top just before the 3.30 p.m. was signalled.

Would Hubert come or would she have to wait? In either case she "would be good." She would do her accounts on that heathery knoll on the far side, where you looked not toward Thorsby, which was hidden, but away to Dunham Mill and Dr. Horace's house at Plympton.

Ah, yonder was the smoke plume; then came the long train shaking itself as it rushed up the hill towards her, carrying Thorsby to clearer skies and the wash of unmuddied waters—perchance also bringing her world. He was there—no, he wasn't! He had been detained at the last moment. Larkins had gone out and, of course, he could not leave the——

"Oh, *there* he was, just stepping upon the platform!"

"Oh, he has a parcel in his hand! I wonder what it is! Oh, I hope not more books. With baby and all I have not half-finished 'Creamcheese!' Oh, the dearest lad that ever the sun shone on!"

CHAPTER XLIX

MISS MAY HEATHCOTE, CAPTAIN OF THE GAMES

HERE begins the sad tale of Edith's madness, brief but inevitable, and of it all, Tim, bad, bold, wicked, unconscious Tim was the cause. On the day of the christening Hubert had come to an understanding with his father.

"I am happier than I can say, father," he said, "that you have done what you have done to-day. But I wish to state that I do not desire for me or mine any part of your estate. I chose my part. Tim did your bidding; I did not. He is a good fellow and ought not to be done out of his dues. Let all, except maybe a keepsake or so, be for him. And, father, he ought to marry."

"*I* think so too," said the surgeon-general, relieved to have his own intentions placed before him as a duty. "I will think. Let me see—I have not heard of the Heathcotes, my first cousins, for a long time. I remember before I came back from India, Heathcote was for ever announcing the arrival of more olive-branches. I am sure some of them were girls."

When he came out to Green Lane and talked to his son, the ex-Indian officer talked more in his old man-of-the-world way, and did penance for it afterwards, by cutting his "Trichy" in two before smoking it the last thing at night. For, though he abhorred the papacy, he practised penance.

So, with an invalid mother as a harmless chaperon, Miss May Heathcote arrived at the Manor House, Thorsby, upon a long visit. She was innocent of all intentions upon the virgin heart of Tim, nourished

on poetry and idleness. She was an active and to the common male eye, a remarkably attractive young person. Tim was afraid of her from the first. But the parents had agreed on the subject, and hoped much from these two overrated factors in the production of the domestic affections—propinquity and the long result of time.

Miss May Treherne Heathcote was the young lady of the type Cultured-Enthusiastic. She had been educated at a great new-model girls' school near Oxford, where they utterly neglected arithmetic and geography, were strong in book French and hockey, and regarded the head of the games as a little lower than the angels. Occasionally, as a set-off, the professoresses of this establishment would train up some extra clever girl for the Oxford Senior Local, and if she took honours she was afterwards referred to as "a perfect steam-engine for work," and the school took a pride in her, second only to that of the head of the games.

But May Heathcote had held both positions, and she was a pretty girl withal—in manner perhaps a trifle aggressive. It was the tone of the schools at that time, and, to say the truth, also of a section of society of high esteem in the fashionable-gossip journals. Altogether May Heathcote, her spirit dressed by circumstances, was a singularly up-to-date, off-hand, breezy maiden of twenty-one, who was simple-minded without knowing it, and (like many other critics) romantic while loathing the word.

May was tall and walked with a swing. She did not "clump" like the elder school of Lady Ethelreda; but she held her head high "and looked the whole world in the face, for she feared not any man." On the contrary!

She was fond of giving information, fonder still of getting it, and to use her own words she "thought small potatoes of Tim."

Tim, poor fellow, certainly did not shine. He laboured under the disadvantage of knowing the purpose of her coming there with her parlour-keeping mother. The young lady did not, and would not have cared if she had. She was the favourite of a grand-parental Heathcote who had bestowed upon her a handsome dowry. And this, in the surgeon-general's estimation (as well as in Tim's), was no barrier to the union. Again, quite the contrary.

But Tim did not know how to set about the business. He was like a golf-player who has crammed up all the myriad books which tell you *how* to do it, but who had never swung a club! Naturally Miss Heathcote was not at all in the same condition. She knew—oh, well, there were those cadet fellows, and that young assistant professor, and Mr. Bridges of the Arsenal, and the cousins in Ireland—they were so silly—oh yes, and funny old people who had squired her here and there. So Tim, soft with want of exercise, whom she could distance easily in a race round the gardens, to which sport she invited him the very morning of her arrival, whose feet got sore after he had walked two miles. Cousin Tim who had never played cricket, or golf, or hockey, who did not fence, or ride, or shoot, who did not work—crowning sin to an Iffleyite, where they had workshops fitted with tools, and sticking-plaster when the girls cut themselves, and arnica for bruises. Tim (summed up Miss May Heathcote) was "oh, no end of fun." R.I.P.

But the idea of marrying Tim never entered her head.

On the other hand, she was immensely interested by the Odyssey of Hubert. Sarah Jane, the under housemaid, had been assigned to Miss Heathcote as her maid. She did not want a maid, having been accustomed not only to arouse herself, but to see that a whole dormitory was on foot betimes as well.

But May Heathcote did want some one to talk to in that dreary old house, with only two musty elders and a muff. (Arrange to suit.) Aunt Kidson she was barely civil to, not liking the old lady. She said she had false eyes.

But Sarah Jane Bertram she could talk to. Sarah Jane called herself Lucille, and had come to the manor under that name. She gave two-thirds of her wages to her mother, on condition that she would always refer to her as Lucille. She was a pretty waiting-maid. She read the continuous story in the *Daily People*, and knew what was due to her. They were all Lucilles, and being a good hard-working girl, she felt she was well within her rights. As indeed, considering all things, she was. It was but little to ask, considering the life of self-sacrifice and honest toil she led, only lighted by the under-gardener (who called her Polly, and chucked her under the chin), telling her that a pretty flower like her ought to marry a gardener. Then Lucille tossed her head and tried to pretend he was a gay young callant, with ruffles on his sleeves and a slashed doublet. But—she sewed his buttons on for him all the same, and, on the whole, things went very well.

Needless to say, Lucille admired Hubert immensely. She informed Miss Heathcote of this the very first night, as she was doing her hair, which consisted in brushing it out over the back of a chair; an operation which May would support for hours, being made that way. Lucille further stated that every servant in the house would die for Master Hubert. She would, she knew. It was a burning shame, it was.

May laughed, and said that such a holocaust was wholly superfluous, as Mr. Hubert appeared to be provided with a wife already.

Then Lucille unfolded. As she told it the story did indeed bear some resemblance to her favourite

literature, and the undying hope of the *Family Rainbow's* readers that similar luck might come their way some brave day.

But Lucille was a narrator, a thing born, not bred. And she interested Miss May Heathcote so much that she ceased from jesting, as she heard of the leaving of his father's house, of the ultimatum to remain or be cut off with a shilling, of the resident surgeonship in the yard, the death of his benefactor, the cruel charge of murder, and the setting up of the "sixpence-in-the-slot" dispensary at the corner of Dunham Street, "as you go along Cheviot Road, miss!"

The tears were in Lucille's voice before she had finished, and if a few fell upon Miss Heathcote, that young lady thought nothing the worse of her for it.

May listened, soothed like a pussy cat by the slow, soft action of the brush, tireless and regular (Lucille had the gift), and then put the woman's question.

"And this cousin of mine, Hubert; what is he like? Is he handsome?"

"Oh, miss, he is as handsome as handsome——!" And Lucille described a hero—Hubert seen through the combined lenses of Wenda of the *Daily People*, and the authoress of "A Pair of Kaiser Moustaches," which had enraptured her in the *Family Rainbow*.

Certainly Hubert's right ear ought to have gone off by spontaneous combustion.

"And, such a lot as he knows! There was our neighbour's—I mean mother's neighbour's, Mrs. Edward Acton Jones's 'usband——"

Lucille did not often drop an "h," but this was a bit complicated.

"And he fell from his cart—connected with the City Corporation sanitation, miss—fell and——"

But we need not go further into the case of Lucille's mother's neighbour's husband. Sufficient to say that it was a marvellous cure, as all the town

knew, and many there were about Cheetham Lane that began to go nowhere else ever after. Oh, Dr. Hubert, he would be just like a lord if he had money; not that he could be called poor—sixpence or a shilling for five or ten minutes, not to speak of the medicine if you liked; that mounted up to money. But he was so proud that he wouldn't take a penny from his own father, not even now when they had made it up. All was to be for Master Tim.

Oh yes, miss. It was quite easy to find the surgery. Master Hubert was only there at certain hours, but Mr. Larkins—he was a pleasant gentleman, though of course not so handsome as Master Hubert. Oh, yes, she could find out the time, of course.

And Miss May Heathcote went to bed, exceedingly eager to make acquaintance with this marvel of a cousin, this Bayard of the stethoscope, the glass of *Daily People* fashion, and mould of *Family Rainbow* form.

CHAPTER L

THUNDER IN THE AIR

AT the surgery the increasing pressure of business had caused Hubert to arrange with his landlord to permit the opening of a door through to the end house, No. 3, Dunham Street—so that the entire ground floor of both properties might be used for the purposes of surgery and dispensary. The upper floors were quite sufficient, in the meantime, for living rooms. Mr. Gilmerton, who admired his tenant very much, assented, and even went the length of providing a separate entrance hall, with a stairway (and possible greenhouse), at the higher corner of his property, "so that," as he said, "thae sick folk need never come across Mistress Salveson's leddy veesitors!"

These arrangements were almost complete, and now Dr. Theophilus Oglethorpe Larkins had his own room and appliances behind the dispensary, leaving the main surgery to Hubert. It was a bright morning in late June. Hubert had ridden in from Green Lane, happy in the knowledge that Edith was mending quickly, and that for almost the first time her foot took the ground with something of its old firmness. There was no rush of patients when he arrived and entered by the door round the corner, which is to say, No. 1, Dunham Street.

Hubert liked to do a little research work in his leisure time, aware that some such pursuit is the best freshener for the busy practitioner's daily round. Besides, he was writing a thesis for his

university on "The Influence of Great Industrial Centres on the Spread of Disease."

So, in the brief slack water before the noon rush, he was busily writing up his notes on the corner of the operating table, when he heard the single "ting" of the bell which he had connected with the now historic turnstile. He paused a moment, with the pen poised to his cheek, hoping that the patient would take the left-hand entrance, which, prominently labelled, led to Mr. Larkins' department.

But a knock fell upon his door, in itself an unusual circumstance. And, prompt upon his answer, the door opened, and a tall, lissom young lady entered, in a pleasant little whirl of blowing hair, rustling skirts, and the June winds that frisked along the Cheviot Road.

Hubert rose expectantly. The girl stood silently before him as he bowed. She looked very little like a patient, certainly not like any that working-class district surgery had ever sheltered. Hubert noticed the broad belt of untanned leather about her waist, with the eyelet-holes worn with use. She stood with a thumb thrust into it, and surveyed him from head to foot, half-amused, half with something else in her eyes, which clearly was not disdain.

"She must be waiting for me to speak," thought Hubert. "You wish some advice, miss—ah?" he paused, unavailing. Then remembering his work, he added: "Will you please tell me how I can be of use to you?"

She smiled. The amused expression increased. Hubert noticed that she had a pleasant face, handsome too and strongly marked, black eyes and hair, with the free, easy manner of one who has never yet met her dominator in the world.

"No," she said at last, laughing a clear, hardish laugh, and speaking in high, distinct tones, "I am not a patient. I am quite well. But, not being

connected with the yard I have paid a silver shilling for the privilege of knowing my cousin!"

"Your cousin?" said Hubert dully. "Pardon me, but I fail to understand."

"Well, I am May Heathcote, your cousin, in the second degree, I believe; the daughter of Claudius Heathcote of Heathcote, in the county of Surrey. Is that exact enough? And I have been original enough to pay a shilling to shake you by the hand. Now, please don't spoil it, by being stupid and wanting to give it back!"

They shook hands, and in five minutes Miss May had been introduced to Dr. Theophilus Larkins, had transformed herself into a nursing sister, had assisted at a slight operation, had even penetrated to the dispensary and caused the heart of the qualified pharmaceutist to ache, and had eternally attached to herself the young affections of Master Howard Stanley. Mrs. Stanley, above stairs, remained the sole implacable.

She said: "Yes, miss! Certainly, miss!" And showed all that was connected with her own speckless kitchen department. But when May was about to enter the parlour, she interposed. "These is Mrs. Salveson's private happartments, miss. And in 'er absence she don't like them being shown to *strangers*!"

This might have been said by the Queen's maid-of-honour at Windsor; save, that is, for the slight difference in accent.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said May easily, and thought no more about the matter. But Mrs. Stanley, mother of Howard, and guardian of the domestic happiness of her absent mistress, muttered between her teeth: "An impudent hussy, that's what she is; she sha'n't put me down with her airs! His cousin, indeed! Well, much all his cousins have ever done for him—aye, and all his other kin put together. There will be trouble come o' this,

or I'm a Jump-an-see monkey with a curly tail!"

And as the Dunham Street housekeeper, mother of Howard, was clearly no such animal, trouble was sure to arrive!

And it did, though by no fault of Miss May Heathcote, or, indeed, of anybody else. Circumstances over which nobody had control; and after that, again spadeful after spadeful of more circumstances—these were alone to blame. That is, so far as weak humans (and outsiders at that) can be trusted to apportion praise and blame.

Miss May Heathcote was a young lady quite accustomed to "run her own show." She had lived much with a grandfather who spoilt her, if that which is plain gold can be spoiled. At any rate he had done his best. At twenty-one she knew that she was perfectly able to take care of herself. So she requisitioned the aid of Howard Stanley, commanded him to run to the manor to tell her mother where she was, and that she would be back "some time." Her cousin Hubert would see her home, if it happened to be late.

Howard scudded, catching the tram that ran along the Thorsby Leas to near the old Waterside cottage. He succeeded in delivering his message and getting back before the return trip of the old wheezy car. He entered the cost on his account for "Express" messages, but afterwards crossed it out, and paid it himself, for the sheer pleasure of having done something for "the young lady." And at the week's end his mother, in vain requiring an explanation, cuffed him soundly in lieu thereof.

And ignorant scoffers affirm that there is no such thing as silent suffering for love's sake in these sordid days. These know little of one Howard Stanley, and the worm-in-the-bud which preyed on his (more or less) damask cheek.

They had a little lunch together after the noon

high-tide of business. Dr. Theophilus Oglethorpe Larkins seemed at first a gloomy young man, who spoke but little, save in the exercise of his profession. If he was handsome, thought May, he was only austerely so. His hair was very black, blue-black, indeed, and stiff—like—like—like—yes, M. Henri Rochfort's.

She giggled at the thought, and put her napkin to her lips. The young man looked up, and Hubert demanded why she laughed. Nothing loath, May told. And as both had studied in Paris, that single name evoked an entire new world. They were chattering like magpies in three seconds, and the austerity had quite vanished from the dark brows of Mr. Oglethorpe Larkins.

May congratulated herself every moment of that day. She was free of that hateful house, of the eternal gardens, where there was nothing to do except to get the stand telescope and look at the ships, no books except dreary poets, and that big fat boy with the smooth round face, like the comic miller in a pantomime, to bore her with everlasting screeds of them. As if she had not had years of cramming such classics at school, with all the notes in small type at the back. "*Auff!*" It was good to be at the Dunham Street surgery! She had learned the names of nearly a hundred things, and helped—yes, actually helped; done something—and talked, nice good-tasting talk with people who had seen something and been somewhere.

Then she had met Hubert. He pleased her—yes, he was fine and manly and all that. And he was going to take her out to see his wife. Mr. Larkins could easily find her a wheel. He knew a man. Of course! Nothing easier. Hubert's wife would be so pleased. This was something like life. Till she had seen Edith—yes, she would call her Edith—she could only know half of the only real-life idyll she had ever come across.

. . . . .

At Green Lane Edith had had a long and unusually trying day. She had not slept overwell the night before. Baby had been uneasy. "Oh, nothing very much," her husband had said, with a curtness quite unusual with him. But there was, Edith was sure, a strange moist pinkness about his skin that alarmed her. His mouth watered too at the corners. He must be feverish! Hubert had in vain asserted that such things were common to all infants, and that Master Edward Charles had looked just the same yesterday and the day before. Edith had never found him so unsympathetic. Baby was feverish, she was sure—perhaps inflammation. Oh, Hubert!

So on the eve of departure, Hubert paused to take the child's temperature (which was a little below normal), and added a little lime water to his feeding-bottle, for his wife's sake—kissed her, and so took his way surgerywards.

Then it turned out a hot day, and Waddleham was more than usually trying. She took him walking in the heat of the day when he ought to have been reposing, and laid him down to sleep when it was cooler, just when he might have been established in his little bassinette under the fir-trees by the side of his mother.

Everybody seemed to have more rights over him than his own, ownest mother! Her little boy, after all! But Hubert said this, and Mrs. Waddleham said the other thing; and she was sure, yes, sure, they were going to take him away from her! That old father who came out in the yellow chaise—even he took Edward Charles up as if he belonged to him. He wanted him, that was evident, to make him dried and cold and cruel like himself. Hubert—even Hubert. But oh, dear, what nonsense she was talking! Why, Hubert was always, altogether hers, and it was nonsense! She knew it was nonsense. But oh, she did wish that he would

come home to her. For somehow things were all at sixes and sevens that day.

Edith was sooner on the white bridge that afternoon. She *knew* he would come. She never had been so sure of it. But after watching the approaching smoke-plume of the 3.5 build up as the train breasted the rise, and then scour away over the moor, no one came out except a railway inspector. He shook hands casually with Robert Cossar, clapped the old man on the back, and then went into the office to look over books and papers, and take the numbers of tickets.

Edith waited, with the tears rising, till they had disappeared. Then she walked blindly to a hidden corner, just beyond the bridge, and cried, and cried. She had been so sure he would come. Silly, of course, but she was.

Presently she rose and went to look for baby. *He was all she had now!* And, even so, she was not sure but after all he preferred Waddleham. Baby was in the distance, his "pram" flanked by the massive figure of Waddleham who held a green umbrella over them both. Up in the station a nasty shunting train noisily detached empty coal waggons for the Long Loan Colliery siding. It did this in a thoughtless, aggravating manner.

Edith was not herself at all. Even her accounts and bank-book brought her none of the usual consolation. She went and sat in the little garden and tried to read "Alton Locke," because she had heard Dr. Larkins praise it to her husband. She did not understand; perhaps because (as she said herself) she was stupid; perhaps because the bees were humming all about, and Edith was naturally afraid of bees. But chiefly, there is no doubt, because her eyes would keep watching that browny-white slip of road, where the moorland consents to come to a standstill, instead of tumbling over and burying

the swarming thousands of Thorsby under millions of tons of black peat.

Hubert would come that way. All that simple soul was wrapped up in Hubert. He was late to-day. Something serious must have hindered him, as he had not telegraphed. She got up and walked to and fro on the embankment, from which she could see better.

It was hot and there was thunder in the air. The electricity set her nerves a-jangle. She sat down and failed to keep still. She took out the little ten-shilling Waterbury which Hubert had given her, and wondered if her own gold one (still at the East Dene pawnshop) would have told a more agreeable tale. The hours went leaden-footed.

At last—at long and last, on the far moor brink, Edith saw an object, small and black as the dot of an "i." Her heart leaped within her. All her cares seemed to be over in a moment. Hubert, of course —who else?

But presently the only object resolved itself into two, and the second shone white against the dusky ledges of the bog. Presently Edith could make out two riders, and then, not knowing what to think, she went indoors. She hated visitors. Who could it be—and with Hubert? She wished she had not cried. She wished she had had baby. She looked in the glass. What a white, peaked face! So plain! She wondered whatever Hubert saw in her. And the tears lay so immediately under the sky-blue clarity of her eyes, that the fountains of the great deep might be broken up at any moment.

CHAPTER LI

THE BEGINNING OF THE MADNESS

"AND this is Edith!" Hubert came in all out of breath, blushing with speed (the Head of the Games at Iffley College having forced the pace a bit). He went directly up and took his wife's hand proudly.

("The first time he ever came home without kissing me!")

"Edith, this is my cousin, May Heathcote, who has come to see you," he said. "She came to the surgery to-day, and Mrs. Stanley gave us all some lunch——"

("Oh, she did, did she?")

"——So that May could ride out and see you. She and her mother are staying with my father at the manor."

("Ought to have taken her mother with her, then!")

The tall girl came forward, breathing steadily and tranquilly, and put out a largish firm hand, cool and strong like a man's.

"Oh, I did so want to come," she said. "I had heard so much about you, you know, and I think it is just splendid; all Hubert and you have done—making your own life and all that. And oh, I hope you will like me!"

Edith gave her hand, and murmured something incoherent, which did not matter, as it was swept away in the torrent of May Heathcote's enthusiasm.

"Yes, that is the kind of life I should like—to make it for myself. To live on other people's

money is not right. I was going to take up something; either a games'-mistress, or teach a "gym.," or paint fans; I was not sure which. But now I think I should like to be a lady doctor—a specialist, of course. I could not bear general practice."

Hubert laughed.

"Our practice is of the generalest," he said. "Will you take off your hat, Cousin May? My little girl here has not got very strong yet, and can't go far."

("He needn't humiliate me!")

Then Hubert turned to his wife and patted her on a secretly rebellious shoulder. Stupid man; he did not feel the nerves quivering underneath, nor know of any reason why they should.

"And how has the Spoilt One got through this day? Thought it was a late night, eh, when I didn't turn up by the three-thirty? Cried, eh?"

("Oh, how could he? And that pet name of their own! It was a profanation!")

May took off her hat negligently, tossed her head to throw the loose coils into place, laid her hat on Hubert's papers upon the little bureau which Edith was so proud of.

Edith, striving hard to recover herself for Hubert's sake, beseeching her own heart not to be foolish, tried to speak some kind words to the stranger. But off-hand May, interested in an electric battery, with attachments and pools of mercury, answered cavalierly, as was her fashion with another of her schoolmates, who in turn would have retorted as brusquely.

But Edith, cultivating prejudice like a precious plant, heard only rudeness in the tone of public-school-girlism, and froze as only the loving and tender can freeze.

Hubert went out to find the station-master's niece with a view to tea.

"You play, don't you?" said May; "somebody told me you did."

"I used to," Edith answered defiantly; "but we sold our piano to help pay for the surgery."

"Did you? How splendid of you!" said May, meaning what she said. But Edith did not catch the accent of sincerity. She thought she was being laughed at. This carried her yet farther.

"Yes, and we pawned our watches—at least, I did mine. Hubert's had to be kept for his work——"

"I know, feeling people's pulses. Doctor Larkins let me count one to-day—a boy's. But he did not think it could have been right. I made it too many!"

("Insolence!" muttered Edith; but whether she referred to Larkins or Miss Heathcote it would be difficult to decipher.)

"I think a doctor's life is a splendid one," said May. "One is doing good right from the start."

"Yes," said Edith, "it is easy enough for those who have friends and money; but it is very hard without."

"I suppose some wise people would say that young doctors ought not to marry so young," said May thoughtfully. She had recovered her hat, and now sat twirling it about on her fore-finger.

The words lighted the train. Edith went off with a flash.

"Well, I did not ask him to marry me," she cried. "I kept him away as much as I could. But oh, I know all his people hate me, all of them! All of them think I am not fit for him, not good enough for him! They wish I was dead—you wish I was dead!"

She had risen to her feet, wringing her hands in distress. The window was small and difficult to open, or she would have escaped that way. Hubert's back could be seen through the kitchen door. He was in parley with Lizzie Cossar for immediate tea. But he had not heard, and he came back smiling complacently. "Thank you, Lizzie,"

he was saying over his shoulder, "just when you are ready."

He entered and stood appalled.

His wife was on her feet, pale and passionate, repeating over and over that she knew something. That her people were not like his, that if it were not for baby she wished she were dead!

But the off-hand May had not ruled, with a rod of iron and sugar-candy, over three hundred school-girls for nothing. She knew hysteria when she saw it. She instantly took command, and laid Edith down on the sofa. She was only fainting. The silver cord did not snap, but it had twanged warningly.

"I don't think your wife is as strong as you think she is," she said. "I have seen girls like that at school among the swotters—hard workers, I mean. Something has taken it out of her. But now I will leave her to you. Give her my love, and tell her it's all nonsense. We are all ready to love her. I'm sure I love her already more than the whole pack of my relatives. She sent her watch to be pawned, and sold the piano for your sake. That's what I call the right sort."

It is a pity that Edith did not hear this eulogium. It did not have the same effect, nor even sound the same, when Hubert shamefacedly repeated it.

May Heathcote scouted the idea of being escorted to the manor.

"I've ridden ten times that distance many a time; and besides, perhaps——"

But she did not condescend upon the "perhaps."

It may, however, have had to do with the fact that Dr. Oglethorpe Larkins, riding out to ask his chief an important question, met the young lady at the bottom of the first descent by Hutchin's egg-farm, and went home with the question still unanswered.

Edith came to herself, with a chill sensation of infinite misery. The foundations of her world

seemed to have melted away. Hubert was there, truly. But he said little; made her take a draught, which he had ready mixed by the side of her bed. She was too proud to ask if he had ridden back with his cousin to the Manor House. Of course he must. Or perhaps he was only giving her this draught, so as to send her to sleep. Then he would go. Nevertheless she took it, and hoped that she might never wake. This was the beginning of the madness of Edith.

CHAPTER LII

THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICAL STUDY

BUT not the end. The end was not yet.

On the morrow came Dr. Horace Growling and sat by Edith's couch awhile. He had his carriage, and had driven round by the south (Dunham Massey way and Clinton), taking Green Lane on the return trip. Edith was very pale, and the keen eyes of the old family doctor, who had had time during his long life to study his cases, detected the evidences of mental trouble.

"What is it?" he said bluntly. "Something is troubling you."

The girl lay a space, slowly tearing a leaf to pieces and scattering the fragments on the light wind that breathed up from the heated seaboard and blew in puffs athwart the cooler tableland of Green Lane. Edith could not make up her mind to answer. It seemed as if she were preferring a charge against her husband, when she well knew that it was no fault of his.

"Tell me. I am an old man," said Dr. Horace Growling. "I have listened to many secrets. I have never told any."

"It is no secret," said Edith, her lips faltering; "only I am a goose, I suppose!"

"'Tis common to the race!" said Dr. Growling, smiling.

"And I can't help thinking, sometimes, that—that I am a hindrance to Hubert, a clog on him. He might have found some one who would have helped him more, without angering his family."

Edith was eager now to speak; but Dr. Growling laid his big, soft, much-experienced hand on her little thin one, blanched to the colour of milk, with the veins showing blue and faint lilac.

"I have known the Salvesons for fifty years—aye, more," he said; "sons, father, and grandfathers, with all their collaterals in their generations; and I pledge you my professional word of honour, Mrs. Salveson, that never one of them was a man like your husband, Hubert. And, what is more, it was you, and you alone, who made him a man!"

Edith smiled wanly.

"You are kind—very kind," she said, looking at him. Then suddenly, "Did you ever know the Heathcotes?"

"The Heathcotes? Why, of course——"

And just at that moment the Waddleham appeared in the doorway.

"A lady to see you, Mrs. Salveson," she said; and lo! smiling in the doorway, in piquant hat and feather, short riding skirt, and tan cycling gloves, appeared Miss May Heathcote.

The doctor shook hands with her, asked for her father, hoped soon to have the pleasure of seeing her mother, hoped that she would come to see him at Plympton, and, making an excuse, went out to look after his horses.

And, as he went, he whistled a long, low whistle—very mellow.

"Master Hubert must look out. The little one is jealous!"

Then, after permitting some time to elapse, he went back. May was chattering assiduously, and Edith making short replies. He could see her observing every turn of the girl's head, every movement of her hands.

The name of Sir Thomas More dropped carelessly from the lips of the Iffleyite Captain of the Games. She was, it appeared, interested in the men who had

opposed the English Reformation, and their reasons for so doing. She had been reading Froude.

"Did you ever read him, Mrs. Salveson?" she said. "Oh, I think really that I must call you Edith; but did you? Oh, you should. He is splendid. You nearly always disagree with him, and pedantic people say he is not accurate. But he makes you think. He stirs you up, and makes you so angry, that you want to find out all about it for yourself. So I've been reading Sir Thomas More's works—an old black-letter book they have got at the manor. I mean to steal it. But don't tell. They will never find out. Uncle only cares about 'Keith on Prophecy' and Tim about poetry. So they'll never miss it."

The old gentleman's eyes twinkled. He looked at Miss May Heathcote more kindly, and said: "I read Sir Thomas More sometimes too. What do you think of him?"

May's face lighted up with the joy of finding a hopeful antagonist.

"You are not going to laugh, are you?" she cried. "Father always laughs, and calls me a rebel; says I am specially anathematised in the prayer-book, and that I should sit down during the Athanasian Creed, as people do when their health is being drunk. No? Well then, it may be high treason, but I think Sir Thomas More was the best man who ever lived; so kindly, so loving, so wise, so witty."

The doctor shook his head, but tolerantly and kindly.

"You Heathcotes are breaking out in fresh places," he said. "I never knew one of you who cared about anything but foxhunting and pheasants. Where did they teach you such things?"

"Oh, I got started with going in for honours in history last year at Iffley. Naturally, I nearly muffed it, because there were so many things I wanted to know the reason of, and the things that

win marks were never the things I was interested in. But, about More?"

"A hard man, for all his merriment," decided the doctor gravely. "How about the burnings, and beatings, and prisonings?" Dr. Growling watched the girl's face.

"Oh, you have been reading Froude and Foxe—*I* know!" she cried. "I did too; but that was of the time. They all did it."

"The old argument—two blacks!" rapped out the doctor. "What do you say, Mrs. Salveson?"

Edith was looking very strange. This girl seemed to take all her friends from her one by one.

"I don't know anything about these things," she said; "I have never had time to read. I had the washing and housework to do before, and since I was married there has been the business to build up."

She was determined that she would sail under no false colours. May put out her hand and patted Edith's gently.

("Oh, the snake in the grass!")

"Indeed, you have done far more and far better than any girl I ever heard of," she said; "but I wish you would read some history. You have no idea how interesting it is. You were at the East Dene High School, weren't you? You must have had some there. But perhaps you did not care for it, like me with my arithmetic. I made three out of a possible hundred at the exam.! But anyway, won't you let me send you some of the books?"

"No, thank you," said Edith; "thank you very much. I have lazied too long. I must get back to work soon."

Then Dr. Growling managed to convey to May Heathcote that it was time to be going. He offered to drive her back to town. That would be a chance to call upon her mother, and to say "How do?" to the prophet.

"There's my bike?" suggested the young lady doubtfully.

"It will go up on the box with John—lean against the splashboard. He will drive carefully."

"But will your coachman like that?"

The old doctor laughed heartily.

"There spoke the true Heathcote aboriginal stock. You in the country ride in your coachman's carriage at your coachman's pleasure. My servant obeys my orders. John is broke to bicycles, cameras, auto-wheels, everything. Why, he would even permit you to get up beside him."

"I should like that very well," said Miss Heathcote, "if I didn't want to have it out with you about Sir Thomas More."

She kissed Edith, tossed baby, and was gone.

Edith sat down to think. She thought long, and the result was the following letter to the out-and-outer:

"Dear Father,

"I am wearying to see you and mother. Will you come and see me on Saturday? And please go immediately to Gilson & Exeter's, the booksellers in the Square, and ask for the best history of England, also the price of a history called Frood's, or some name like that. It has in it about Sir Thomas More and Henry the Eighth, the one who killed his wives. But don't buy that if it is very dear. I should also like a notebook not ruled for cash. Please don't say anything to Hubert, as I want to surprise him. If you get the History of England at once, please send Sue out with it by train. I want it very much.

"Your loving daughter,

"Edith Salveson."

So simple a letter, yet somehow steeped in possible tragedy!

. . . . . .

Then Edith went out and took counsel with the old station-master, with the result that the fateful letter went to Thorsby by the forenoon up-train. It could go as a parcel. Dods the guard would be going straight to the "Hen-and-Chickens," and would give it either to the out-and-outer, or to her mother, at the cottage. No trouble at all. Could she not give Dods a shilling?

Bob Cossar scorned it in the name of Dods.

"Lassie, ye are yin o' us," he said. "I tell ye there's never a lad on the line, platelayer or driver, guard or shunter, that wadna be prood to serve ye. There will be wigs on the green when they ken that Dods has had the luck. Na, na, nae siller! Just you stand by the bars yonder and gie Dods a bit wave o' your hand as he gangs by. That will pay him better than coined siller!"

By the three o'clock train that same afternoon arrived Sue with a package and a message. For once Edith was excited by something else than the advent of Hubert. She was glad he had not come. Her fingers shook as she undid the brown paper package.

The letter was from Messrs. Gilson & Exeter, St. Anne's Square, informing Mrs. Hubert Salveson that they sent three English histories for selection, each good in its own way. She would be able to make a selection. They were severally Green's, Gardiner's, and Meiklejohn's. Froude's "History of England," referring to Reformation and post-Reformation times, was an expensive work in twelve volumes. But they happened at that moment to have a half-bound secondhand copy of the reprint, which they could let Mrs. Salveson have for £2 12*s*. 6*d*. cash. And they were, dear madam, etc., etc.

Edith sat stunned. All that money for a book! Nearly five weeks' rent of Old Quay Cottage! It was wicked. What could people know of life who

spent their money so? And, after all, perhaps it would be of no use.

Then she looked through the three books. Meiklejohn's. Oh, she could understand that—so clear, simple. Yes, that would help. It said, "For Advanced Students." Perhaps, after all, that girl did not know any more than just that. She turned up about More. Yes, she must certainly have that.

Gardiner. Oh, that looked more difficult. But what a lot was in it. Perhaps, after all, these would tell her all there was to know, and she could do without Froude. She dipped into John Richard Green, and at once tasted another stream.

"That was the way they talked. Oh, I must keep them all!" And she sought her purse with a feeling of utter shame and disgrace that she was robbing her husband. But a sudden thought ran like hot molten metal through her veins. She had still nearly eleven pounds of her own original sixty. She could have the second-hand Froude after all. And then Hubert would like to talk with her, just as well as he liked to talk with that other girl!

"Mrs. Salveson, will you take baby?"

"In a moment, Mrs. Waddleham!" cried Edith. "I have a letter to write for Sue to take back by the next train."

And she sat down and wrote feverishly. The parcel was to be put on the six train for Green Lane that night, "*without fail*"—the last words underscored. Sue, disappointed and indignant at a spoilt holiday, was packed back to Gilson & Exeter's.

And Edith, taking baby on one arm and all trembling with eagerness, began to transcribe into the notebook the names and dates of the Heptarchy kings.

CHAPTER LIII

SIR THOMAS MORE—AND OTHERS

FOR some days Edith worked feverishly, the books under her pillow in bed, by her hand on the sofa. She was strange and strained with her husband when he came home, sent him out with baby on the plea that he saw so little of his own child. It would grow up not to love him, and it might be all he would have! Hubert thought his wife a little feverish, but put it down to the heat, and added something tasteless to the soda-water and milk which she drank.

He went away, however, and staid out a full hour, listening to the recital of the late Mr. Waddleham's marital faults and failings. He heard also of his martial prowess—how there was not a man in the boiler sheds, no, nor in the yard, that could stand up to him, 'cept maybe the out-and-outer, and he only because, for all his lack of science, no matter how you hit him, it don't hurt him, no more than a blessed anvil!

Mrs. Waddleham also confided to Hubert that marriage was a dreadful risk. And for this reason. Because the man never knew the girl he was marrying till after—oh, years and years! Likewise the woman the man; though that did not take quite so long, men being wicked but transparent creatures. To this she added various maxims, applicable to special cases, which would be out of place anywhere save in a highly scientific treatise.

Obedient to Edith's wish Hubert stayed out as long as he could, and then re-entered, aching to

see the little wife from whom he had been parted the better part of a day. She received him with a glow of excitement on her lips, in her eyes, about her cheeks. She was sitting or rather reclining on the sofa by the window, and the early volumes of Froude's history made a hump under the shawl. She rested her elbow upon them. Meiklejohn was under her pillow, Green on the window-sill.

"What do you think of Sir Thomas More?" she began, eagerly opening fire as soon as he came within range.

"Sir Thomas who?" said Hubert, mystified. He thought at first she was referring to one of the titled doctors, his senior colleagues, whom she might wish to consult.

"Sir Thomas More!" she repeated with emphasis, sure that was the way May and Dr. Growling had pronounced the name, but colouring deeply all the same.

"Darling," said Hubert, taking her hand, "I see what it is; you have got it in your head that you are worse than you are. A little care, perfect quiet, this lovely high air, sea and mountain together, and Dr. Growling and I will set you on your feet again! No matter about the old Sir Something Somebodies! They know no more than we do; they only charge more!"

Edith rose slowly from her reclining position to her elbow, and searched his face.

"You are laughing at me," she said sadly, "laughing at me. And it is not kind of you, Hubert, just because I am ignorant!"

"You are the wisest little woman in the world!" said the enamoured Hubert, "*and* the prettiest!"

He took her in his arms, but she repulsed him—not but what she was absolutely aching for affection—only lest by chance he should uncover Froude and Gardiner. The other two were comparatively safe.

"No, no; don't baby me," she said, "I won't be babified!"

"Why, what's the matter with you now, little one?" said Hubert, much astonished.

"Nothing is the matter with me," snapped Edith, "anybody would be the same. You don't love me any more—because I am . . . so . . . ignorant . . . of history . . .!"

"Of history!!!" gasped Hubert, absolutely at his wits' end.

"And I couldn't help it," Edith sobbed on, without taking any notice; "I was never put into the history class at school. They made me do . . ." (sob) "harmony and . . . freehand drawing instead!"

"But, Edith, I——"

"Oh, pray don't think it necessary to excuse yourself!" she cried; "I *know* I am an ignorant little beast—yes, *beast*—you won't love me any more now, when—now, when" (she swallowed down something here)—— "Why, even now, you won't talk to me about Sir Thomas More——!"

"But I don't know who he was!" said Hubert. "Tell me! I thought he was a London doctor or something."

"Oh, Hubert, I see it in your eye; you are mocking me. You were at school—at college! And I'm sure that—that—your cousin has been talking to you all day about Sir Thomas More——"

Hubert looked marks of interrogation larger than would go on a twelve-sheet poster.

"My cousin—May Heathcote, do you mean? Why, I suppose she is gallivanting with the brave Tim, like an obedient daughter. I haven't seen her to-day!"

Edith's face cleared a little, but the clouds closed immediately with the thought of, "How cunning of her. Tim, indeed! Who would look at Tim when——"

Aloud she returned to the subject of Sir Thomas More.

"What do you think of his persecution of the Protestants?"

A kind of rushlight was playing upon Hubert's darkened mind this time. He managed to make out something of his wife's meaning.

"Oh, you mean the old fellow in Henry VIII.'s time, don't you? Let's see. He was a friend of Luther's, wasn't he? Or John Knox's?"

"No, no!" cried Edith, searching his eyes, "of Erasmus!"

"Ah, of Erasmus. Well, what was he up to; wrote essays and took bribes, didn't he?"

"He—he! Oh, Hubert, now I *know* you are making fun of me. That was Lord Bacon. He was too noble, and—he put—his beard out of the way when they beheaded him, saying that . . . it . . . had" (sob—sob—sob) "never committed treason! But oh, I forget the date!"

Hubert took his wife in his arms.

"Well, you know a jolly sight more than I do," he laughed. "I never did know much about these things. You see, my father took me pretty early from school to send me to Edinburgh, and after that I had 'exams.,' and hospitals, and more 'exams.,' mostly all the time. And if I ever did know anything about old More and fellows of that sort I've forgotten it long ago. But I'd love to hear you tell me!"

"Would you, indeed?" A monentary joy gleamed on the girl's pale face; but then again she thought he was only saying this to comfort her. She could believe almost anything, but that there was something her Hubert did not know.

"Swear it—no, don't swear," she checked herself; "that brings bad luck. But say it, as you love me!"

She stopped again.

"No, as you love baby!"

"As I love you and baby!" vouched Hubert promptly.

"No, just baby!" said Edith, insistent.

"Well, then, as I love baby; you *know* I love you!"

Edith sighed a long sigh, and proceeded to draw the ready cork of all she had been able to glean in these feverish hours concerning the great, the wise, the honourable, the catholic, the witty Sir Thomas More, Lord High Chancellor of England.

Hubert listened, his hand in Edith's and his finger occasionally on her pulse. He repressed his yawns with care, but all the same Edith noted his inattention. "It is because I do not tell it interestingly enough," she thought. And she brought the story abruptly to an end. "So they executed him!"

"Thank you ever so much, Ede dear," said Hubert, pulling her ear. "I declare I never was so wise before. I wish I had been court physician to King Henry, that's all. And now, little girl, you take this little draught, and get off to bye-bye like a good baby's good mother!"

But that night Edith, determined to find all for the worst, and to imagine what she could not find, cried herself silently to sleep, to the accompaniment of Hubert's steady breathing.

"He wouldn't do that if he really cared!" she said, as she sat up and listened. "Oh, if only I had been educated like—like *that*! Oh!—oh-h!—oh-h-h!—why did I ever let him marry me? He ought to have married" (sob, sob), "yes, and if it were not for me he would—oh, I'm sure he would. I should have been so happy then—I should—I should—I know I should!"

And after exhausting herself in this agony of possible happiness, she slept from very exhaustion.

CHAPTER LIV

"MARRIED ABOVE HER"

BUT, instead of putting an end to Edith's plan of self-education up to the standard of Miss May Heathcote, Hubert's kind apparent ignorance (which she still held suspect) only stimulated her. Hubert came home at three or six, according to occasion, artlessly recording some surprising inrush of his impulsive young lady cousin, sometimes with a very bored Tim, but more often alone.

Hubert was under the impression that it was a good joke, and he retailed and embroidered every incident he could remember in the hope of interesting Edith and diverting her from her melancholy. In this he succeeded. She listened with dilated eyes, and found that of a certainty his mind was given up to his cousin May. And that he only talked to her because he had to, and (yes, perhaps a little) because he was sorry for her.

A phrase gleaned somewhere and altered, floated up in her mind—most unfortunate wreckage.

"Married above her," it said; "The girl who married above her!"

And Edith would lie for hours gazing at the ceiling with the words running like machinery in her head. Sometimes they went at full speed, just like the "fast 'un," which made the cottage tremble every afternoon. It brought no dear memories any more. For now it said, instead of "Ca-rá-ta, Ca-rá-ta, Ca-rá-ta!" only "Married-a-bóve her! Married a-bóve her! Married-a-bóve her!" as it went by.

But the slow, interminable trundling empties were

the worst. And Edith fairly buried her head in the pillow to escape from the drawling condemnation, "Mar-ri-éd-a-bóve-her! Mar-rîîîî-éd aa-bóve-her!! Maaaa-rîîîîîî-éd a-bóve-her. Hoooooop - Chuck - Clack! Wheeze! Mar-ri-éd-a-bóve-her!"

That was what they said, the wicked semaphore arms and the creaky wires of the signal box chuckling an ugly laugh, like mischievous gnomes who knew all about it.

Her father came to see her, astonished at the expenditure, but wishful to contribute, if only in less costly literature.

He brought with him "The Converted Nothingarian," a work of which he was mortally tired, as it had formed his wife's Sunday reading for his benefit from time out of mind. He had also the following: "Dullow on the Strengths of Timber," "Pinchbeck on Strains," and a "History of Architecture," upon which Edith seized at once, "that girl" having spoken to Dr. Growling about Gothic art in Italy, and the barbarism of the black and white cathedral of Pisa.

"There, little lass," said the out-and-outer, genially, "what say you to that? Bought 'em for next to nothing—job lot at a sale along the Cheviot Road. And there's more where they came from! Sort of inventor chap he was—builder, architect, so forth. They was goin' cheap—dirt-cheap was no name for them. I couldn't bring more to-day, else mother would have spotted me. And I don't suppose as you want her to—— No, I thought not. Of course, it's an expense; but better than those fellows at Gilson & Exeter's, where they charge you full price for each book. Buy 'em in job lots, I say—wholesale. That's the ticket, eh, little girl?"

He sat with his arm about the sofa pillow, cramping his big person on a stool, and showing her such rude tenderness as he knew how. Edith, angry with herself, but possessed with the sole idea—or disease rather—remarked for the first time how different his

manner was from that of Dr. Growling or her father-in-law.

"Oh, Edith Dillingham," cried her heart, "you wicked, ungrateful girl. He has asked for a whole day off that he may come and bear you company. He brought you up. Think of all the kindness, the love, the help of years, of the time when the household lived on tinned food and soups for half-a-year that they might save enough money to send you to the East Dene High School. For shame! Oh, for shame!"

And the out-and-outer continued clumsily to stroke his daughter's hair, and read her extracts out of *Lloyd's*, which he had substituted for *Iconoclast*, when the door opened, and with the usual breezy waft May Heathcote came in, glowing from her ride, Master Edward Charles in her arms. The babe lay still, doubtless feeling the security and pleased with the swift movement.

The out-and-outer rose hugely to his feet, almost touching the low cottage ceiling with his head. May ran to the sofa-side, and stooping kissed Edith, unresisting. Then she placed the babe in his mother's arms, where he instantly bent himself into a hoop and showed symptoms of discontent.

May stood erect and held out her hand.

"Your father?" she said, smiling. "I am so glad to meet you. I have heard all about you. Mr. Larkins says you are the strongest man in the yard. I like strong men."

She said this quite frankly, yet somehow as if it were the diploma of the Legion of Honour. Edith resented the tone. Was it not enough that she should take her husband? Was there to be no end?

"Thank 'ee, miss," said the out-and-outer, shaking hands heartily. "I'm sure I don't know how Doc. Larkins knows. Except that I aways stop fightin' where I am!"

"Only a strong man, a very strong man can do that!" said May admiringly.

("The minx! And my father!")

"Oh, no; it's persuasion that does it, in general," said the out-and-outer modestly. Yet while May Heathcote cooed to Master Baby, he took the opportunity of passing his fingers through his well-shaped grey beard and of bringing it to a proper point. He also pulled up his shirt-collar, and wished that he had thought of cuffs.

As soon as May ceased her "Does he, then?" and "Diddems, now"-ing to the babe, Edith removed Master Edward Charles to the farther side of the bed. But it chanced, by some unearned increment of ill-fortune, that her son was in a mood which, in another, would be called "fractious." In his dim, vague, sleep-and-bottle-bounded mind, Master Edward Charles resented these unmeaning flittings. To be out in the open air, to be jumped up and down, to be put to sleep; these were in the order of things. But to be used as a plaything, a bundle of clothes to be handed here and put down there, displeased the young gentleman. Accordingly, he twisted himself into knots and howled.

He contorted his visage, clenched a pair of small mottled fists, and said loudly that all was vanity under the sun.

May leaned over, and took him up as easily as she would have done a dumb-bell. And lo! Edward Charles gurgled on his way to the ceiling. Edward Charles smiled as he came down. The fashion of his countenance changed, and the world became no longer vain.

Edith raised herself on her elbow and called for Waddleham.

"Take baby out!" she said crisply.

Then she leaned back, adding tragically in her heart: "Even my son does not love me!"

After this Edith took little part in the conversation.

Her father instructed May Heathcote on the management of men, and the duties of "bank manager," meaning, thereby, not the man who keeps an eye on overdrafts, but a stormier and less polished gentleman, who is responsible for good order among shouting lorrymen and stamping dray-horses.

May listened intently, an elbow on either knee, her head bent far forward to catch every word, and an intelligent chin poised on both palms. She nodded occasionally at telling parts.

Edith, who could not understand that everybody had not known all that from their youth up, lay still, a little pulse in her throat checking off the wiles of womankind and the foolishness of men.

"I should like to do that!" said May Heathcote; "that is a man's work; almost as good as being a doctor, which is the best of all!"

She smiled at Edith, thinking that she would be pleased. Edith lay with closed eyes.

"We are tiring her, I fear, with our chatter," said Miss Heathcote, rising; "perhaps I have stayed too long, and made you talk so much. She had better sleep. I do hope that I have not done her harm. See, we will leave her alone. If you like, I will walk part of the way with you. I have to get back to the manor for lunch to-day, worse luck!"

The out-and-outer rose.

"Certainly, miss," he said, "I shall be proud."

And he thought to himself what nice friends his daughter had. Ah, that was what it was to marry into a good family. Perhaps after all, '*Reynold's*' *Iconoclast*, and these people were wrong. Certainly, he had seldom met a nicer or more affable young lady. She seemed to pick up everything almost before you said it.

They rose to go out. Edith was still apparently asleep. They moved softly, so as not to awake her.

"Such a pity," whispered Miss Heathcote, "that your daughter is so delicate! But Hubert says—*husssh*! Oh, I forgot, I brought something she will like."

And she tripped off to her cycle, from the handle of which dangled a little wicker basket. Here were strawberries and peaches. May tiptoed to the cupboard and secured a provision of powdered sugar, a spoon, and a plate. Then she daintily arranged these, and set the strawberries in the best light on some green leaves under the admiring eyes of the out-and-outer.

"There, that will do," she said, smiling at him; "that will be nice for her when she wakes. It will be a surprise."

"Aye, miss," agreed the happy out-and-outer, "it will be a surprise."

"I wish I had some cream," said May; "but one can't get that here. And besides, perhaps she likes them plain best. I do. There is plenty of juice; I chose them myself."

"I am sure she will," said the out-and-outer confidently.

He would have been less confident as to the enjoyment, if he had seen Edith ten minutes after they had silently withdrawn, the out-and-outer clumsily tripping over the mat, and being reproved by having Miss May's finger shaken laughingly at him.

("The adder!")

Mrs. Hubert Salveson sat up, listened, rose, glided into the little back room on whose window-sill, on winter nights, she used to set the lamp for Hubert. The view gave upon the road by which—that—that—*that* would take. There she was, and Edith's father, as thick as thieves—aye, thieves, a good word! She stole every one from her.

("Ah, foul! foul!")

Then Edith's eyes fell on the dainty service of

fruit. She went to the little table at the sofa-edge, and seizing the basket she threw it, with all its contents of pretty peaches and juicy strawberries, into the fire of Long Loan coal, which even in summer was sometimes necessary to keep an equable heat in the chamber. She cleared the plate. She threw in also the sugar *her* fingers had touched. It blazed up. She was only kept from adding the plate, spoon, and crystal sugar-bowl, by the remembrance that these did not belong to her. Then Edith went, washed her hands, and lay down, relieved and somewhat happier.

When her father re-entered after his escort duty, she was still asleep. And so, bidding Mrs. Waddleham say "Good-bye" for him, he went back to Thorsby by the next train.

CHAPTER LV

THE INEVITABLE, MEDICALLY CONSIDERED

"IT was bound to come," said Dr. Horace Growling philosophically, through an after-dinner haze of cigarettes to his best friend and confidant, Gibson, the Scotch house surgeon at the big East Dene hospital; "bound to come from the first," he repeated; "though Hubert Salveson's wife is as good and wise a little girl as ever I set eyes on."

"Humph!" said Gibson, with an air of reminiscence, "that's saying a good deal, if you meant all you were in the habit of confiding to me twenty-five years ago."

"Fiddlesticks!" said Dr. Growling—"young men's nonsense. You wouldn't like me to tell your wife all that you—— No, I thought not. Well then, about Edith Salveson. She is a nice girl—as women say, the sweetest girl; as we say, the right sort. But she was a working-man's daughter, educated a little, a very little above her class—just enough to put her out of touch with the young fifth-standard fellows who left school at fourteen to enter the boiler-shops. Well, she marries a man of good family, a gentleman of old line and many relatives. These 'cast him off,' as it is called. But the father is not half bad, the old surgeon-general, only a very king of cranks—mad as the absence of any hatter under the Indian sun could make him. You listening, Gibson?"

"Every word," said Gibson, pouring himself out another glass of the doctor's port. "Go on. This is my kind of yarn—human interest, and a pretty girl!"

"Two; that's the trouble!" said Dr. Horace grimly.

"Always is," said Gibson, sipping; "but look here. You don't mean that—that young Salveson is a sweep?"

"Oh, no, nothing of the kind," said Dr. Horace. "The case is purely a mental one—fixed idea, that's all. But he—there! we are going too fast. I have not come to that. I was only laying down the general philosophy."

Gibson made no remark. He knew his Growling.

"Well, so long as Hubert was poor—two pounds a week and find for two; that's what old Pritchard gave him at the yard—she was a perfect wife. Happy? No name for it, my boy! When they moved into their surgery—sixpence-in-the-slot; a very good idea for the poor. Oh, you needn't laugh; it is! I've been there assisting. It works well. Now that was all her idea. All! She financed it, sold her piano, watch, whatnot, to start the thing; went on tea and toast all day to give Hubert a good meal when he came home."

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Gibson, without apparent connection.

"Yes," said Dr. Horace, a quite unusual warmth coming into his voice. "And see here, Gibson, she learned to dispense as well as any chemist. She did—oh, perfectly irregular, I know; but all the same, no mistakes! She kept the books, and had everything running as sweetly as your grandfather's clock. Really, I trace her illness to worry over a bill at three months given to a wholesale firm——"

"And you knew and let that go on——?"

Dr. Horace Growling thrust forward a bull-dog countenance, with the jaw unusually prognathous. "You know nothing about the little lady, or even about Salveson, if you think you can help them that way. Just you try and see, that's all!"

Gibson nodded.

"Umm," he said, "I have met the type; it is rare —*rarissima!*"

"Right," said the doctor; "but Nemesis began to hover so soon as she couldn't work all day, and, when the Salveson-Heathcote lot began to get over their megrims—when the father came out, and especially this new cousin (a deuced pretty girl, I tell you, Gibson, whom they have fetched to the manor, all o' purpose for to marry her to that young fool of a Timothy!), then this girl, romantic as a new-fangled school and the circulating library can make her, must needs take a fancy for running in and out of the surgery, out and in of their cottage at Green Lane. She comes to see me even; wants to be a lady doctor—all that rot. But talks through it all bright as a button, wise as a professor, and (what makes the trouble) easy and pretty as a peach. The little wife, sick, nervous, and alone most of the day, feels herself shelved. Thinks it is because Hubert, who worships the ground she doesn't tread on nearly enough, has found some one with more of a—what is the silly expression?—of a kindred soul! That's about how it stands, Gibson. Now, what do you think? How does it strike you?"

"Care about her baby?" inquired Gibson, with a lift of his vigilant eye from the wine-lees in his glass.

"Used to adore it," said the doctor; "but now seems all for learning and giving herself an education. Wants to be well-read, so that she can converse—like the other girl. Oh, she has her knife in that other girl, I tell you!"

"Rum thing!" said Gibson.

"What is?" demanded Dr. Horace.

"Oh, everybody being so confoundedly innocent, a perfect lamb-nursery, a dovecote, with just one who pecks or butts because the weather is hot! I should prescribe a low diet and bleeding, though that's out of fashion, I know."

"You wouldn't if you saw her. She's as frail as a frosted blossom. It's quite pathetic. Last time I was there, let me see, she asked me a lot about Cromwell and Henry VIII.——"

"Cromwell was after that old Mormon's time," said Gibson, lighting another cigarette.

"You Goth!" said Dr. Horace. "Why, I thought you Scots were well educated. Oliver was not the only one of that name!"

"Go on," said Gibson, "I wish I had had the treating of those warts on his old republican nose. *I* believe they were tubercular! Lord, what an article that would have made for the *British Medical!*"

"And then she wanted to know about the merits of Froude as an historian, and about Carlyle and the slave trade, and about Governor Eyre, and why the Renaissance manifested itself in Italy and the Reformation in Germany? A deuced deep question that for a girl—eh, Gibson?"

"Must have 'howked' it out of some book," said Gibson. "Why don't you take them all away, and give her something jolly to read, like the *Pickwick Papers* or——?"

"Because she's so dreadfully in earnest—looks at you with her lips apart, drinking in every word you say. All a-tremble too, with the effort to remember—face pale ivory, dry skin, quick pulse——"

"Blue pill, blue pill!" cried Gibson; "that's liver *and* a temperament. Then get young 'What's-his-Name?' to take her right away. If they haven't money, dash it! he's got a colleague and a clever fellow. Can't we arrange something? A month in Paris would be the making of her. Versailles, St. Germain——?"

"She would hate the thought," said the old doctor. "Hubert, Larkins, and the detrimental girl—as good a girl as they make on the new model—got talking about their Paris days t'other night, and little madame rose and marched out!"

"Awkward!" said Gibson. "I'd like to see her. Well, to-morrow's Sunday——"

"I have an operation early. Besides, my Number Two's off, so I must stick it out all day over there."

"Well, then, say Monday."

"Monday be it!" said Gibson; and Dr. Horace Growling rang for the evening "tray," the bringing of which introduced less serious and, to the reader of this history, less interesting topics.

Now the wise word of Dr. Gibson, of the East Dene hospital, was correct. They were all so dangerously innocent that the worst might be expected. One ordinarily experienced worldling would have cleared up the mess in five minutes. Dr. Gibson was going to try.

CHAPTER LVI

"BULLY LITTLE BILLY!"

EVENING brought Edith little relief. Hubert came home at 6.30. By this time Edith had read herself dazed in the book called "Bannister's Styles of Architecture." She had gathered several general ideas. Things pointed were Gothic; things round were Roman. A steeple was, therefore, Gothic; a bridge, Roman. But there were also such things as Saxon and Norman arches which were rounded too, and she found pictures of Roman tombs which were pointed. Then there was Early and Late, and Decorated, and Debased, and Flamboyant—all made for the vexation of one poor little troubled head, that should have been concerned solely as to when Master Edward Charles Heathcote was to have his next bottle, and when he ought to be bathed and put to bed.

Hubert said nothing about his cousin. Indeed, he had not seen her. But Edith thought his very silence suspicious. Indeed, the poor fellow could not go upstairs to change his coat without Edith drawing disadvantageous conclusions therefrom. But when Edith broached the subject of church architecture, to her surprise Hubert betokened a great delight that she knew anything about it.

"I thought Presbyterians never cared," he said, very short-sightedly. "You would say so if you could see the Edinburgh churches!"

And he went up to his box of note-books, sections, drawings, and brought down a thick double fold of brown paper filled with photographs.

"I took these myself in Normandy some years ago, after getting through my 'second professional," he said. "I was used up, and so I set off with thirty pounds and a half-plate camera. There are some not bad things among them, if it would not trouble you to look!"

"Trouble—no!" cried Edith, the clouds rolling back for the moment. And they were just settling down to a pleasant talk, in which, for a little, at least, Edith would have forgotten Miss May Heathcote, when the chief of the little evil pixies, who are permitted to intromit with human affairs, for some unknown but no doubt wise purpose, so arranged it that Master Will Dillingham, with a jovial rout of holidaying lads and lasses, should come out to visit his sister and wish luck to the new baby.

The ladies were "quite the lady, far above mere mill-workers," according to Master Will himself. Unfortunately they had started rather late for holiday-making. Some had hired donkeys from the "giddy-go-round" field; others had come attached to the tails of the aforesaid donkeys; a few had cycles and bone-shakers; one or two active spirits had padded the hoof; but all were equally jovial.

Hubert, on edge at once at the interruption, folded up his photographs and went upstairs to put them away; while Edith, with the bottom once more out of her world, could not keep back her tears.

They were kind, of course—recklessly, rollickingly kind. Some of the merrier slapped Hubert on the back; and, though he laughed, Edith's jealous eye could see that he did not like it.

Then there was drink. Baby's health must be toasted. Baby, being present, objected. Mrs. Waddleham told Mr. Tony Arch that if he did not mind and behave like a gentleman, she would teach him how in a way that he would remember.

Miss Tilly Doe, Will Dillingham's culinary friend,

also warned him to behave, or "she would fetch 'im such-a-one right in a minit!" Then a youth nicknamed "Bully Little Billy" sang a song recounting the not especially delicate doings and misdoings of that same Bully Little Billy, and the whole company joined in the elevating refrain of the chorus:

Bully Little Billy, from the setting of the sun
'Ee's enough to knock yer silly;
'Ee's no kid-glove Little Willy,
Bully Little, Billy Little,
Billy Little, Bully Little,
Billy-Bully-Billy till the clock strikes one!

The riot carried far out over the moor, and up in his ticket-office Bob Cossar listened with a troubled heart. It seemed to cross him like a portent. He had noticed "his little lady" looking anxious these last days, and this would certainly upset her. He wished people from Thorsby would let her alone. She was better so.

Then Will and his jolly rioters, having proposed and drunk the health of baby in their own liquors—for Hubert had none, save a little in case of sickness—called upon Hubert, as in his character of proud father, to reply.

Hubert gravely thanked them as austerely as if it had been a funeral occasion, instead of a festival organised in honour of Master Edward Charles Heathcote Salveson, at that moment attached to his feeding-bottle.

It was nearly nine before the crew mounted their steeds, some of which had first to be chased, surrounded, and caught with infinite noise and jest—such new, pointed, witty jests—connected with "thistles" and "your brother," or a recommendation to "go and boil your head!" There was a hurtle of brilliant nicknames: "Turnip-head," "Done-brown-Jane," "Dumpling-chump," and others which need not be set down.

At last they were off, and Hubert came in. Edith

was lying with eyes closed, but she had managed to push the window half-way up, to freshen the room.

She did not look up as he came in; but he was glad to see that she was not crying. He thought all this fuss might have been too much for her. He went and patted her gently on the cheek; but she rather drew away.

"Tired, little girl?" he said. "You don't want to see any more photographs to-night, eh? Well, we'll have all to-morrow afternoon. I have to go over to East Dene in the morning—such a worry!"

"To East Dene?" Eyes that had been dull, blazed.

"Yes," he answered carelessly. "Gibson, my old chief, wired to the surgery for me—an important operation in the forenoon—rather an honour!"

She did not reply, and he went on: "I shall ride to Spenny Ferry, I think. It's rather longer, but sets you down almost at the hospital door. Then I'll try to be back for lunch; or, if I am a bit late—you can never tell how these things will turn out—you can keep a plateful hot for me. I shall be all right. Crossing the water will make me ready for cold horse. And, after that, we will have the whole afternoon, you and I!"

She repeated in a low tone after him, as a child says his lesson, "You and I . . . all the afternoon—yes!"

"Now I think you should go to bed, Edith," he said gently, "the day has been a little too much for you. I have some letters to write. Oh, and I forgot, there is good news, or what will likely be good news, in Manson's hands. The Dock Board has amalgamated the Ferry Company, and Manson says that we may get a hundred thousand at least for our property and rights if the thing is properly worked."

Edith sat up suddenly.

"A hundred thousand pounds? Then we shall be rich! You won't want the surgery any more!"

"No," said Hubert, smiling, "not unless you like it. We shall be able to go where we like, meet whom we like, do what we like——!"

"Like that . . . like Miss Heathcote——?"

"Oh," said Hubert, "she is not so very rich, nothing like that—not unless she and Tim decide to hitch up and make one team of it! But I see no signs of that. She is all keen on being a lady doctor—I pity her patients!"

Edith sank back. She said nothing at all. It was as if she had got her death-blow. It was, she knew, the end.

She let herself be put quietly to bed without making any fuss. She heard her husband in the little kitchen meekly assisting Waddleham with the toilet of baby. He filled the bath, tried it, poured in and out, cold and hot alternately, till it was exactly to Waddleham's thermometer—which was her arm plunged in to the elbow. Then Hubert came back and arranged his couch on the sofa as he had been used to do in the yard surgery. He came over to her bedside to say good-night.

"Darling, I shall be up and away early to-morrow, you know. I shall try not to wake you. Waddleham is going to give me my breakfast with Cossar. I want to get over early."

"Ah!" said Edith.

"Back soon, you know!" said Hubert, smiling and stooping to kiss her. She was about to let him go; but at the last moment she snatched at his hand.

"Hubert," she said, "mind don't let that man Blunt come near you ever; I'm sure he wishes you harm. I believe—I saw in a dream—I am sure it was he and Clarence Pritchard who laid the trap for you that night. They wanted your papers. I am glad you kept them safe, and that

you will have a great deal of money to be happy with——"

"Dearest—dearest—why, it is yours far more than mine, we will enjoy it together!"

"Yes?" she murmured.

Hubert patted her shoulder.

"There, there," he said, "lie down. You are overwrought. It will be right in a little while. I'll take care of you. Don't be afraid, Ede—such times as we shall have——"

"Better than in the old surgery?" she queried, suddenly turning upon him dry of eye, but he did not see the grey-white look of the tears in hiding beneath.

"Oh, far better!" he cried hastily, with the easily detected false assurance of a man.

Edith said no more, but turned her face to the wall. He was in the midst of an important letter to Mr. Manson reviewing the whole transaction of the Old Quay property when Edith turned again suddenly. He had thought her asleep.

"Hubert," she said, her blue eyes dark as the sky at midnight with the spreading of the pupil, "you will never, never forget that I loved you?"

"Why, no, of course not! I know it; I always knew!" said honest, simple Hubert. "Go to sleep, darling."

And he wrote and wrote. Then he closed, directed, and sealed. Lastly he went and looked that all was right. He saw that baby was in his cot asleep, Waddleham snoring. His wife lay quiet, her face hidden in the shadow of the curtain. Only past the corner of the window-blind he could see, high on the great Plympton embankment above the red glow of the lamp, the vane of the distant signal standing stiffly at "Danger."

CHAPTER LVII

TITHE RIDGE TUNNEL

SUNDAY dawned gloriously and Hubert rose betimes. Edith was still quiet. He bent to hear her breathe. She stirred slightly and he crept out. The lark was singing everywhere about the moors, and by the station a goods' train went clucking by. Hubert set off on his wheel, with some of that elation inseparable from a young man making an excursion on such a morning. He would in reality far rather have stayed. He thought it was a bore of Gibson. He had not the least idea that he was sent for to be sermonised by his old chief.

His way lay directly across the moor to Spenny Loan Ferry, and a side-wheel packet of retiring habits which bunted and snorted across once every two hours. Now Edith had not slept that night. She had gone over and over all that was taking Hubert away from her—or so, at least, it seemed. But it was ripe and real enough to her. The society of his own people, the money, this girl! They were just made for each other; doubtless they would be together that day. And why blame them? Tim—oh, imagine any girl looking at Tim when her—when Hubert Salveson was there!

And then she kept forgetting. Her mind did not seem to grasp things properly. She had begun too late to learn those Anglo-Saxon Kings, the Normans and Plantagenets even; she could never get them right. And that was only a little part of the knowledge she ought to have been getting up

slowly all the time so as to be able to be a companion to Hubert.

"Oh, no, she would be better out of it. It would relieve Hubert of a burden that he ought never to have taken on himself. Each must keep to his own class—and oh, she loved him too much to regret.

"But that girl—no, she could not think kindly of her! And baby! Ah, that was a difficulty—that was the dreadful difficulty! If only it had not been baby it would all have been so easy. But to leave baby to that masterful minx, who tried to put her down, who talked to Hubert and even to Dr. Growling as if she were patting them on the head; no, she could not! She would not!"

The night had been a long one, terribly, terribly long, of unmixed darkness of Egypt, the kind which could be felt, which pressed like pain. But Edith lay gripping herself, immovable; and only at dawn did she know that her pillow was wet on either side of her head. Her tears had run down so silently, so ceaselessly as that. Then sitting up, she turned the pillow, a little before Hubert moved.

There was still a long time to wait. It had to be. But she had arranged the time in her mind. Waddleham always left her for an hour or so on Sunday mornings alone with baby; that later morning which in Scotland they call by the more ancient name of "forenoon."

Waddleham was a gossip with a great sense of duty, and, so far as Green Lane was concerned, few opportunities. But every Sunday forenoon she walked across the moor to a little Methodist service in a wooden shanty, and had a talk with the surfaceman's wife afterwards.

Bob Cossar had to wait for the few Sunday trains which troubled the repose of Green Lane, and in especial for the "fast extra" which, in the summer season, conveyed the Midland trippers to the sands and shrimps of Clinton.

It passed close on the tick of noon.

Now Bob was a God-fearing man, and though he could not often go to the kirk, he was an approved "professor." He read his Bible, *and* the weekly sermon of his great, far-off, unseen idol—one Alexander Whyte. Very reverently he referred to his oracle, even as one of the persecuted might have done to Peden. "Sandy says this"; "It was in Sandy last week!" Which, as next to holy writ, clinched the matter for Robert Cossar.

Only to one or two in a generation does it fall to be so canonised during their lifetime. The which, indeed, is no mean reward, and comes only to those who have not sought the praise of men, but solely and with long consistence, through inward storms and outward discouragements, the glory of God. "*It was in Sandy!*" said this sober, Scotch, clear-headed, judgmatical man. And I know no higher praise, save, perhaps, the loving trust of little children.

Though the sound brought her no peace Edith heard Bob Cossar croon his psalm—the twenty-third, the only one to which he could sing the same tune twice. He knew it, though no one else had ever been able to recognise it. Then he unfolded the crackling sheets of his weekly religious paper, and turned to the lesson for the day, "in Sandy."

He read aloud to get the flavour of the words, but Edith could not hear. The time was long though to Bob Cossar the sermon was far too short. He folded the sheet and placed it in his pocket. That was the reading of the First Lesson. He would read it again after the "sinfu' express," as he called the Sunday excursion, went by.

Bob was obliged to lend his countenance to the performance, because the railway authorities had omitted to consult him. But he sandwiched the sinful one betwixt two readings of "Sandy." And so, in a measure, relieved himself from responsibility.

As he went up the bank by the steps, he thought he caught a glint of something white behind him. But he looked and saw nothing. Just his old eyes, and the bright sun! He would be mistaking the signals next. Aye, aye, it would be time for him to be thinking of retiring.

He had looked " ben " to see that all was well, but the lass and the bairn seemed so peaceful that he did not disturb them.

He did not know that so soon as his back was turned, Edith snatched Baby Edward Charles out of his cot, and, taking up her skirts, fled up the line, careful to keep in the shelter of the embankment. The waft of white Bob had seen, was baby's shawl as she crossed the metals to get to the sheltered moor-side, upon which she could not be seen from anywhere.

In Edith's heart was a resolve. She would clear the way for Hubert and—yes, for the girl who knew all about More without sending for lots of books.

But she would be cautious and wary. The railway? Yes. That was nearest, quickest. There was the fast excursion. It would go past about noon. But on the long, clean double line across the common she would be seen for miles. Therefore she must get to where was a short tunnel through a whaleback reef of limestone rock, on which the moss rested. Then as the train burst out of the tunnel suddenly there would be no time. She would hold baby. He would never know How much better that would be—ah, for all! For her certainly! For baby, too! She could never leave him behind. They would go (she did not use the word " die ") together. She grew almost light-hearted. It was the full madness of Edith.

She was at the Tithe Ridge tunnel half an hour before time. She sat down and waited. It was a fine high-arched world. Of Roman design—that is,

rounded, she thought. Gay, too. For others—not for her. What would death be like? Would God forgive her? Yes, she thought so—she was sure so. *He* knew that it was to make Hubert happier. She had married Hubert to make him happy, and now she would clear the way for him—just for the same reason—to make him happier!

Far away, very far away, she could hear something, the distant chorus of ordered machinery in motion—death coming to her in this great, glad morning, coming with a song.

"Ca-rá-ta! Ca-rá-ta-ra! Ca-rá-ta-ra!" That marked the pace. Her trained ear told her it was not so swift by a good ten miles an hour as the real High Level express, which said simply "Caráta-Caráta," as fast as ever it could. But it would suffice. It would serve. She laid her down on the left line of rails, along which she knew it must pass, and soothed baby; soothed him, and said a little prayer.

Ca-rá-ta-ra! Ca-rá-ta-ra!

There was a sharp cry, a hurrying of footsteps, and down the slope ran the former Head of the Iffley School Games. She snatched and swung Edith and the baby as if they had been but a single Indian club. The next moment breathing fire and furious smoke the monster dashed out of the Tithe Ridge tunnel, flashing green and white, grinding the leagues in his mill and spurning and quaking the bog as he dashed out upon it.

"Why," cried May Heathcote, "how is this? Did you fall down? Was the sun too hot? Why are you here without a hat?"

"Such idiot questions as I am asking!" she thought.

For a long time Edith said nothing. She simply gazed at her saviour in amazement.

"Come into the shadow!" said May. She opened a little case of leather she carried in her

pocket, and poured out some sal volatile into the silver head of the case.

"Take that," she said, "and then you will feel better. It must have been the sun."

"No—no," cried Edith, striving wildly to rise and get away, but always sinking back, "do not touch me—it is all because of you!"

"Because of me!" The astonishment in Miss Heathcote's eyes was plain to be seen—save by our poor Edith.

"Yes, because of you—of you!" she cried, "I came here to kill myself—to kill baby—because of you! I wanted to be out of the way—so that you could marry Hubert——!"

"But I don't want to marry Hubert," cried the astonished May; "why, I would never think of Hubert, not if he had not been married—much less——!"

"Of course—of course," said Edith, pushing out her hand, "I knew you would say that—let me go! What else are you doing here but waiting for him?"

"Doing here?" stammered Miss Heathcote, suddenly crimson. "I came here to meet . . . some one!"

"Ah, of course," cried Edith indignantly, "Hubert's brother, who was so good a cover for the other? Oh, let me go, I tell you—let me go!"

"Poor Tim was a cover, I admit," said May. "But, there, I will tell you, because you will have to help me, and never mention to a soul that you have met me. Yonder he is coming along the embankment. He came to the station by the earlier train. I came from Plympton, old Dr. Growling's place, where they think I am spending the day. He is here now. We are—oh—yes, I will tell you . . . you are so unhappy . . . we are going to run away together."

And Dr. Theophilus Oglethorpe Larkins walked

calmly over the summit of Tithe Ridge, and came forward, rather abashed for the moment to find Edith there, but with his hand stretched out notwithstanding.

"Give me baby," said Miss Heathcote, "and I will tell you all about it. We are going to run away together. Theo's aunt is going to chaperon us. We shall get a special licence to-morrow morning in London, and Theo will be back in the surgery by Tuesday. We have left a letter telling all about it—it is waiting for Hubert at the surgery. We did not tell him before, lest they should blame him."

"Oh!" said Edith, suddenly finding her feet on the earth, and a million-ton mountain taken off her heart, "what a fool I have been! What a fool!"

"Yes, we all are at times!" said May philosophically; "but you really should not go about without a hat. I am going to learn such a lot and help Theo. Will you come to the train with us? We are going down by the slow to Clinton, and then we will get the express at four, and be in London to-night. I won't marry Tim; not for all the family arrangements in Christendom. I don't believe in cousins marrying, anyway. Do come to the station and see us off. That's right—no, not Waddleham—you! Aunt will be in the train. My Theo's aunt, you know—mine to-morrow! Awfully decent of her, isn't it?"

CHAPTER LVIII

EDITH'S PSALM OF LIFE

THE "slow" to Clinton took up Dr. Larkins and his prospective bride. There were no other passengers from Green Lane. A comfortable, smiling aunt, wrapped in a thick veil, reached a hand to Edith. The whistle sounded, and they were off.

Edith gave baby to the station-master, and the two walked soberly back to the cottage.

"I heard you at your singing this morning," said Edith.

"Did ye noo, bairn?"

"Yes, it was the twenty-third psalm, wasn't it?"

"What else, bairn?"

"I should like to sing it with you," said Edith.

She could not have pleased old Bob more. He was of the truly devout.

"Aye, lassie, we'll sing it thegither, and then I'll read ye a screed in 'Sandy.'"

They sang, to a real tune this time, steadily through the whole psalm in the Scotch version. Edith's voice never checked nor faltered, save when she came to the stanza:

> Yea, though I walk through Death's dark vale,
> Yet will I fear none ill,
> For Thou art with me, and Thy rod
> And staff me comfort still.

Hubert was late. But what matter now? Edith went forth to meet him. She saw him afar off, and went up to a high tufty hillock of the moor, on which she stood and waved a handkerchief. Soon he spied her, and waved back so vigorously as to

bother his steering. Then he came up all breathless, calling out: "You should not have come so far, Ede, you will be tired!"

"I shall never be tired now," she said; "I am quite better."

"Quite better!" he said, smiling gladly; "why, I never heard the like of that. There's that man Gibson—old Growling has been cooking him up. Such a talking to I never had in my life. Said I was killing you; wanted me to take you abroad—to Paris—Vienna—I don't know where!"

"Shall I tell you where I want to go; and will you take me if I do?"

"Of course," said Hubert rashly, "if it be to New Zealand or Timbuctoo."

"I want to go back to the surgery in Dunham Street, and to our happy little home there! Then I shall be well!"

"Oh, but Gibson says——"

"Gibson does not know—I do!"

"Very well then," Hubert agreed; "but how about all that money? Are we to go on just the same?"

"No," said Edith, "I've thought of that too. Those houses and property and rights and things don't really belong to us. They should be offered to the Pritchards—not given, but offered fairly. We can't let the Ferry Company make war on them with what their father left us!"

"But you warned me I was to take care of Blunt and young Clarence!"

"Well," said Edith gently, "perhaps; but I have thought other things since then. It wouldn't be fair. Tell Mr. Manson so from me."

"Well, I don't know but what you are right," said Hubert; "Egerton is home now. I saw him as the old Spenny Ferry hooker crossed the Pritchard's yacht lying at anchor. They were waiting for the tide. He is as brown as a berry. It will be easier to arrange something with him."

"Get value, of course," said Edith; "we shall need a new assistant."

"Eh, what's that?" cried Hubert.

Edith gave him Dr. Larkins' message.

"Tell me more," he said; "I don't understand a bit. I'm as stupid as a coot! I never noticed a thing!"

Edith explained, partially, that to-morrow his assistant would be wedded to his cousin, under the supervision of the excellent Mrs. Oglethorpe of Haystone. And that the young folk would, of course, after the necessary time to enable him to suit himself, be wanting to start for themselves.

"Both have a little money!" she said, with some of her old practicality.

"So had we," he said, putting his arm about her; "come now, let's be getting back. Of course we will go back to Dunham Street, and if that Old Quay business pans out fairly I shall, I mean we shall, buy the property, and build a little bungalow somewhere out in the country for old Bob Cossar to look after during the week."

"Not out here!" said Edith, shuddering as she glanced about her.

"What," cried Hubert, "don't you want poor old Green Lane any more?"

"Never any more!" said Edith; "when can we go back home?"

"Why, to-morrow if you like. You will have to take Waddleham, though!"

. . . . . .

They walked back in the westering sun. "How dear and peaceful!" said Hubert, who seldom enthused about scenery. "Oh, Edith, I don't think there was ever a couple who loved—no I don't mean that—who understood each other so well! And all this while married too—quite old family people, and never the shadow of a shade of a difference! No clouds in our sky, eh, Ede?"

"None!" said Edith gallantly, conscious that, behind her, some ten quadrillions of foolish miles behind, there lay Tithe Ridge tunnel, which she hoped never to look upon again in the world.

"And how we love to talk to each other—no learned stuff, that wearies the life out of a fellow who has been hard at work all day! But just simple things—what you said and what I said, what we have each been doing all day, and about baby! Oh, isn't it splendid to be so united?"

"Splendid," said Edith, hugging his arm.

Then Hubert was taken with a compunction.

"Not but what I like you to read about those old fellows, More and Cromwell and so on, and tell me about them sometimes. It soothes me. I can doze off in no time after an hour of that! Fine thing, history."

"And you are sure you will never regret?" demanded Edith, suddenly facing him, the new happy life glowing in her eyes and face, breathing from her lips.

"Regret what?" said Hubert blankly.

"Regret that you married beneath you!" said Edith firmly, fixing him with her hands one on each arm above the wrist.

Hubert stooped and kissed her.

"Darling," he said very quietly, "God knows and I know, that if ever a poor, idle, worthless fellow married *above* him, I am that man!"

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